

CHAPTER 4

Al-Nisâ': **The Women**

(REVEALED AT MADÍNAH: 24 sections; 176 verses)

This chapter is named *The Women* because it deals chiefly with the rights of women.

The connection of the last chapter with this one lies in the fact that that chapter deals with the battle of Uhud, while this one deals with the circumstances to which the battle had given rise. For the decimation of the Muslim force had left a large number of orphans and widows to be looked after. And it is with duties towards these two classes that the chapter opens. The two chief features of the battle of Uhud were, the death of a large number of Muslims and the desertion of hypocrites; while, following it, were circumstances which brought about a final rupture with the Jews, and it is with these three subjects that the chapter deals.

The opening section lays down injunctions relating to the duties of guardians towards their orphan wards. The second section brings woman to a status of equality with man, and lays down a new law of inheritance, for among the Arabs a woman had no right to inherit the property of a deceased relative. The third section deals with the treatment of women in general and denounces the practice of claiming women as a part of inheritance. The fourth section discusses what women may not be taken in marriage, and the fifth gives them the right of disposing of their earnings as they please; while the sixth first points out the remedy when there is a disagreement between the husband and the wife and then inculcates the principle of charity in general, introducing the subject of hypocrisy towards its close.

After having laid stress, in the seventh and the eighth sections, upon external as well as internal purity, showing how the Jews had neglected the latter of these and how, for no other reason than envy of the Muslims, they had sided with the polytheists, and after having enjoined upon the Muslims to be strictly firm in justice, we are led on in the ninth section to the dealings of the hypocrites who had refused to accept the Prophet's judgment in going out to meet the enemy. We are then told in the tenth section that the question of war was a question of life and death for the Muslims. The eleventh section deals with the attitude of the hypocrites, and the twelfth shows how waverers are to be dealt with. The thirteenth states when and to what extent the

murderer of a Muslim is excusable, because it was very often by treachery or hypocrisy that the Muslims were killed. The fourteenth shows that those Muslims who were compelled to remain with the enemy against their own wishes were excusable. The fifteenth warns the Muslims against being surprised in battle when saying their prayers. The sixteenth and the seventeenth refer to the secret counsels of the hypocrites. The eighteenth condemns idolatry, because it is the idolatrous hypocrites that are spoken of throughout the previous sections, and the subject is thus brought to a close.

Previous to the introduction of the third chief subject of this chapter there is a reversion in the nineteenth section to equitable dealings with orphans and women, and the subject is generalized in the twentieth; while in the same section the hypocrites from among the Jews are dealt with. The next predicts their end, at the same time showing that belief in previous prophets could do them no good if they rejected the Holy Prophet. The twenty-second speaks of their transgressions and of their false allegations regarding the death of Jesus on the cross. The twenty-third section tells them that the whole of the previous prophecy pointed to the appearance of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, while the last one, after referring briefly to the Christian error in deifying Jesus, closes with a reversion to the subject of inheritance.

As this chapter treats of many of the questions arising out of the battle of Uhud, there seems to be little doubt that it was revealed immediately after that battle. And thus, as in arrangement so in the order of revelation, it follows the last chapter. The main portion of it thus belongs to the fourth year of the Hijrah, while there is no reason to deny that some portions may have been revealed towards the close of the third or the beginning of the fifth year. Noeldeke's suggestion, however, that verses 115-125 and 130-132 belong to Makkan revelation, based as it is on the mere fact that the Jews are there "referred to in a friendly spirit", is quite wrong, because, as shown in 3:115a and elsewhere, the Holy Prophet was fair to the Jews even when they were most inimical to him, and the verses referred to therefore belong to the fourth or the fifth year of the Hijrah.

SECTION 1: Duties of Guardians to Orphan Wards

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 O people, keep your duty to your *Rabb*, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind),^a and spread from these two many men and women.^b And keep your duty to Allâh, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship.^c Surely Allâh is ever a Watcher over you.

2 And give to the orphans their property, and substitute not worthless (things) for (their) good (ones), and devour not their property (adding) to your own property. This is surely a great sin.^a

1a. “The word *nafs* is used in the language of the Arabs in two ways, one of which is your saying *kharajat nafsu-hû* where by *nafs* is implied *the inner self* and according to the other use the significance of *nafs* is *the whole of a thing, and its essence*” (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtaḍâ*). It is in this latter sense that the creation of mates is spoken of in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân, and hence the correct rendering of *nafs* on such occasions is *kind*, which implies *the essence*. This is made clear in 16:72: “And Allâh has made wives for you *from among yourselves*” (Arabic *min anfusi-kum*), i.e. of the same kind and essence as you are. Some commentators have taken this to be the significance here, i.e. *He created its mate of the same kind* (*Bahr al-Muḥîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû ‘Abd Allâh Abû Ḥayyân al-Undlusî and the *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). Hasan also explains the words as meaning *of the same kind* (*Bahr al-Muḥîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû ‘Abd Allâh Abû Ḥayyân al-Undlusî on 7:189).

How the first man was created is not stated either in the Qur’ân or in the *Hadîth*, nor is the Bible statement accepted that Eve was created from a rib of Adam. The Muslims do not accept that man was created six thousand years ago. The Imâmiyyah accept the tradition that Allâh created thirty Âdams before our father Âdam, and one *Shî‘ah* Imâm has gone so far as to say that hundreds of thousands of Âdams were created before our Âdam (*Rûh al-Ma’ânî* (Commentary), by Abu-l-Fadl *Shahâb al-Dîn al-Sayyid Mahmûd al-Alûsî*). Nor do the Muslims accept that our world is the only world in this universe; one Imâm is reported as saying that in Allâh’s universe there are twelve thousand systems each bigger than our solar system (*Rûh al-Ma’ânî* (Commentary), by Abu-l-Fadl *Shahâb al-Dîn al-Sayyid Mahmûd al-Alûsî*).

The words occurring here - *Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same* - only declare the unity of the human race and the equality of the

male and the female. Elsewhere we are told that for all of you wives are created from yourselves: “And Allâh has made wives for you from among yourselves” (16:72).

1b. “Many men and women” spring from married pairs. The verse does not necessarily refer to any parent pair of the whole of mankind. The underlying significance seems to be to remind men of the strength of the ties of relationship, an idea finding clear expression in what follows.

1c. The original word is *arhâm*, plural of *rihm*, which means *womb* or *the place of origin of the young*; hence *relationship*, by some restricted to *relationship by the female side only*, or *ties of relationship* (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

3 And if you fear that you cannot do justice to orphans, marry such women as seem good to you, two, or three, or four;^a but if you fear that you will not do justice, then (marry) only one or that which your right hands possess. This is more proper that you may not do injustice.^b

2a. The care of the orphan was one of the earliest injunctions that Islâm gave, and the Prophet had always shown a deep anxiety for the welfare of the poor and the orphans. See 2:220a, 220b, and also 90:15, 16, where the care of the orphan and “the poor man lying in the dust” is described as an uphill task, but one which must be accomplished. The subject is here introduced in detail on account of the number of orphans having been greatly increased by the war.

3a. This passage *permits polygamy under certain circumstances; it does not enjoin it, or even permit it unconditionally*. It may be noted here that the explanation of this passage as generally understood is based on a report contained in the *Muslim*, according to which ‘Â’ishah understood this verse as meaning that if the guardians of orphan girls feared that by marrying them they would not be able to do justice to them, they should marry other women. This explanation, even if the report be taken to be authentic, requires the insertion into the passage of a number of words which the original does not contain, and as the meaning is much clearer, and more in consonance with the context, without the addition of these words, the interpretation given below is preferable. It is admitted that this chapter was revealed to guide the Muslims under the conditions which followed the battle of Uhud, and the last chapter deals with that

battle. Now in that battle 70 men out of 700 Muslims had been slain, and this decimation had largely decreased the number of males, who, being the breadwinners, were the natural guardians and supporters of the females. The number was likely to suffer a still greater diminution in the battles which had yet to be fought. Thus many orphans would be left in the charge of widows, who would find it difficult to procure the necessary means of support. Hence, in the first verse of this chapter the Muslims are enjoined to respect the ties of relationship. As they all came from a single ancestor, a breadth is introduced into the idea of relationship, inasmuch as they are told that they are all in fact related to each other. In the second verse the care of orphans is particularly enjoined. In the third verse we are told that if they could not do justice to the orphans, they might marry the widows, whose children would thus become their own children; and as the number of women was now much greater than the number of men, they were permitted to marry even two or three or four women. It would thus be clear that the permission to have more wives than one was given under the peculiar circumstances of the Muslim society then existing, and the Prophet's action in marrying widows, as well as the example of many of his companions, corroborates this statement. Marriage with orphan girls is also sanctioned in this passage, for there were the same difficulties in the case of orphan girls as in the case of widows, and the words are general. See also 127*a*.

It may be added here that polygamy in Islâm is both in theory and in practice an exception, not a rule, and as an exception it is a remedy for many of the evils especially prevalent in Western society. It is not only the preponderance of females over males that necessitate polygamy in certain cases, but there is a variety of other circumstances, not only for the moral but also for the physical welfare of society. Prostitution, the great evil of civilization, which is a real canker, with its concomitant increase of bastardy, is practically unknown to countries where polygamy is allowed as a remedial measure.

4 And give women their dowries as a free gift. But if they of themselves be pleased to give you a portion thereof, consume it with enjoyment and pleasure.^{*a*}

5 And make not over your property, which Allâh has made a (means of) support for you,^{*a*} to the weak of understanding, and maintain them out of it,^{*b*} and clothe them and give them a good education.^{*c*}

3b. By *that which your right hands possess* are meant the females who were taken prisoners in war. The Qur'ân sanctions marriage with them in this verse. As for the conditions of that marriage, see 25a, where it is clearly laid down that marriage with a prisoner of war is allowed only when one cannot afford to marry free believing women.

4a. The word used here is *saduqât*, pl. of *saduqah* (from *sidq*, meaning *truth*), which means *dowry* or *a nuptial gift*. *Sadaqah* meaning *charity* is a different word from the same root. Other words used for dowry are *mahr* and *sudâq*. It is necessary that a “dowry” should be given to every woman taken in marriage, whether she is a free woman, an orphan girl, or a prisoner of war. So every woman begins her married life as the owner of some property, and thus marriage is the means of raising her status, in many respects elevating her to a plane of equality with her husband. The practice has, however, become more or less general to recognize dowry as a debt which the husband owes to the wife and which she can claim when she likes.

5a. By *your property* is meant the property of the orphans which is under *your* control as guardians. The verse lays down the principle of the Court of Wards. It requires guardianship in the case of all who are weak of understanding, whether minors or not. *Qiyâm* means *sustenance* or *that which maintains* or *supports*. While on the one hand the Qur'ân lays stress on the transitoriness of this life, on the other it teaches that wealth is not a thing to be despised or wasted, because it is the means of support.

5b. “Make it a means of sustaining them so that you trade with it and make it profitable, and so that you may be able to defray their expenses from the profit and not from the capital” (*Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû ‘Abd Allâh Abû Hayyân al-Undlusî). *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî gives a similar explanation. There is also a saying of the Prophet in this connection: “Whoever is the guardian of an orphan who has property should trade with it and should not leave it undeveloped so that the zakât should consume it” (*Mishkât al-Masâbîḥ* (Hadîth), by Shaikh Walî al-Dîn Muḥammad ‘Abd Allâh. 6).

5c. The words are generally rendered as meaning *speak to them good words*, but see 2:83e, where it is shown that the word *qaul* is used to express all kinds of deeds. After speaking of the maintenance and clothing of the orphans in a befitting manner, the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân now calls attention to another great need of theirs which is education. From the first revelation, Islâm laid stress on knowledge, *read and write* (96:1-5) being its very first message, and the Prophet spoke of the acquisition of

knowledge as being as great a need of humanity as the acquisition of wealth: “There shall be no envy but in two: the person whom Allâh has given wealth and the power to spend it in the service of truth and the person whom Allâh has granted knowledge and he judges by it and teaches it” (Bukhârî 3:75). He laid stress even on the education of slave-girls. “The man shall have a double reward,” he said, “who has a slave-girl and he trains her in the best manner and he gives her the best education, then he sets her free and marries her” (Bukhârî 3:31). It is thus of the education of the orphans that the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân speaks here, and the next verse which enjoins the guardians to “test” their wards makes it clear.

6 And test the orphans until they reach the age of marriage.^a Then if you find in them maturity of intellect, make over to them their property, and consume it not extravagantly and hastily against their growing up.^b And whoever is rich, let him abstain, and whoever is poor let him consume reasonably.^c And when you make over to them their property, call witnesses in their presence. And Allâh is enough as a Reckoner.

7 For men is a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave, and for women a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave, whether it be little or much – an appointed share.^a

6a. These words show further, that the guardian is not only responsible for the education of the wards as pointed out at the end of the last verse, but he is also required to examine them and see what progress they have made. According to Abû Hanîfah, majority is attained at eighteen years, but if maturity of intellect is not attained at eighteen, the limit may be extended. These words, moreover, show that marriage should be performed at the age when a person has attained majority, for the age of marriage is spoken of as being the age of attaining majority.

6b. The meaning is: *Do not hasten to spend the property of minors with a view to wasting it before they attain their majority.*

6c. These words allow payment of reasonable wages to the manager of a ward’s estate out of the ward’s property if the manager is not a rich man. The amount charged must be reasonable, taking into consideration the value of the property and the work of management.

7a. Among the Arabs women and children had no share in inheritance, for they used to say: “None shall inherit but he who smites with the spear” (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). The reason is to be found in the fact that the normal condition in Arabia before Islâm was a continual state of war, and only those who could go out to fight were taken into account. This great reform, by which the status of women was raised from the lowest condition to that of equality with men, clearly indicated that the establishing of peace was one of the aims of Islâm.

The principle laid down in this verse is the basis of the Muslim law of inheritance. Children and near relatives, or failing these, distant relatives, whether males or females, are the lawful heirs, and the whole of the property does not go to the eldest son. Whatever objection there may be to this principle on the ground of division of property into parcels, there is not the least doubt that the rule is in accordance with the broad principles of democracy and the brotherhood of man which Islâm seeks to establish.

8 And when relatives^a and the orphans and the needy are present at the division, give them out of it and speak to them kind words.

9 And let those fear who, should they leave behind them weakly offspring, would fear on their account; so let them observe their duty to Allâh and let them speak right words.

10 Those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, they swallow only fire into their bellies. And they will burn in blazing fire.

SECTION 2: Law of Inheritance

11 Allâh enjoins you concerning your children: for the male is the equal of the portion of two females; but if there be more than two females,^a two-thirds of what the deceased leaves is theirs; and if there be one, for her is the half. And as for his parents, for each of them is the sixth of what he leaves, if he has a child; but if he has no child and (only) his two parents inherit him, for his mother is the third; but if he has brothers, for his mother is the sixth, after (payment of) a bequest he may have bequeathed or a debt.^b Your parents and your children, you know not which of them is the nearer to you in benefit. This is an ordinance from Allâh. Allâh is surely ever Knowing, Wise.

8a. By these are meant those distant relatives who for any reason are not entitled to inherit.

11a. By *females* are here meant the female children. When the daughters are the sole heirs they are entitled to a share of two-thirds. The share of two-thirds to which “more than two” daughters are entitled remains the same even when the daughters are two only; a single daughter being entitled to one-half as made clear further on. Compare v. 176, where two sisters are mentioned but they include more than two.

12 And yours is half of what your wives leave if they have no child; but if they have a child, your share is a fourth of what they leave after (payment of) any bequest they may have bequeathed or a debt; and theirs is the fourth of what you leave if you have no child, but if you have a child, their share is the eighth of what you leave after (payment of) a bequest you may have bequeathed or a debt.^a And if a man or a woman, having no children, leaves property to be inherited and he (or she) has a brother or a sister,^b then for each of them is the sixth; but if they are more than that, they shall be sharers in the third after (payment of) a bequest that may have been bequeathed or a debt not injuring (others).^c This is an ordinance from Allâh: and Allâh is Knowing, Forbearing.

11b. This is the second case, and it deals with the question of inheritance when the deceased is survived by parents. In this case the parent first take their respective shares and the residue goes to the children, if there are any, failing which, the share of the parents is increased. But in case the deceased has brothers, the mother receives the same share as she would have received if the deceased had children.

It may be noted that in all cases the payment of bequests and debts takes precedence of the shares of the heirs.

12a. This is the third case, and it deals with the question when the deceased leaves a husband or a wife with or without children. The husband or the wife takes his or her share first, as in the case of parents, and the residue goes to the children.

If there are parents as well as husband or wife and children, the first two would take their shares first, and the residue would go to the children, whether males alone or females alone or males and females mixed. The two-thirds share for two or more

daughters can only be given when there are neither parents, nor husband or wife; otherwise they take the residue, as in the case of sons or sons and daughters.

Practice is against this, and brings in *‘aul* to solve the difficulty. The *‘aul* was first legalized by ‘Alî, the fourth Caliph, who, being questioned about the share of a wife, the other heirs being the two parents and two daughters, gave the answer “without premeditation that the wife’s one-eighth had become one-ninth, for the two parents should take one-third, the two daughters two-thirds, and the wife one-eighth, which make up nine-eighths, and hence ‘Alî decided that each of the heirs should take less than was due, so that the proportion might remain the same (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtaḍâ*). The difficulty would not have arisen if there had been sons instead of daughters or sons along with daughters. If ‘Alî had decided to give the residue to the two daughters after taking away the wife’s one-eighth and the parents’ one-third as he should have done in the case of two sons or a son and a daughter, the question of *‘aul* would not have arisen.

13 These are Allâh’s limits. And whoever obeys Allâh and His Messenger, He will admit him to Gardens wherein flow rivers, to abide in them. And this is the great achievement.

14 And whoever disobeys Allâh and His Messenger and goes beyond His limits, He will make him enter fire to abide in it, and for him is an abasing chastisement.

12b. Commentators are of opinion that by *a brother* or *a sister* here is meant *a brother* or *a sister on the mother’s side* and that the case of real brothers and sisters, or brothers and sisters on the father’s side, is dealt with in verse 176 of this chapter. The reason for this is that here as well as in verse 176, the property to be inherited is that of a *kalâlah*, and it is generally supposed that a *kalâlah* is one who has neither parents nor children. But as a matter of fact *kalâlah* bears two meanings. It means *the person who has no children* whether he has parents or not, and it also means *the person who has neither children nor parents*. It is derived from *kalla* which means *he became tired* or *fatigued*, and therefore its primary significance would be *the person who has no children*. ‘Abd Allâh ibn ‘Abbâs (Companion) is reported to have explained this word as meaning *one who does not leave offspring whether he leaves parents or not*. ‘Umar also is reported to have said that *kalâlah* is *one who has no children, that is all*; see *Gharâ’ib al-Qur’ân*. Hence it is more reasonable to take the *kalâlah* spoken of

here as being different from the *kalâlah* spoken of in verse 176. The *kalâlah* in the present case is one, who has no children but has parents, and therefore the brothers and sisters are not the only heirs and their share is only one-sixth, while the *kalâlah* spoken of in verse 176 is one who leaves neither children nor parents, and therefore the brothers and the sisters take the whole of the inheritance.

12c. As in the case of those who have no children there is much likelihood of their burdening the estate with unnecessary debts, or even admitting debts that have not really been contracted, and of making bequests that would leave nothing for legal heirs, the words *not injuring others* are added, to make it clear that debts and bequests in such a case shall not prejudice the rights of the legal heirs.

SECTION 3: Treatment of Women

15 And as for those of your women who are guilty of an indecency, call to witness against them four (witnesses) from among you; so if they bear witness, confine them to the houses until death takes them away or Allâh opens a way for them.^a

16 And as for the two of you who are guilty of it, give them both a slight punishment; then if they repent and amend, turn aside from them.^a Surely Allâh is ever Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.

17 Repentance with Allâh is only for those who do evil in ignorance, then turn (to Allâh) soon, so these it is to whom Allâh turns (mercifully). And Allâh is ever Knowing, Wise.

18 And repentance is not for those who go on doing evil deeds, until when death comes to one of them, he says: Now I repent; nor (for) those who die while they are disbelievers. For such We have prepared a painful chastisement.^a

15a. *Al-fâhishah* signifies *anything exceeding the bounds of rectitude* (gross, immodest, lewd, obscene) (*Mughnî al-Labîb* (Grammar), by Al-Shaikh Jamâl al-Dîn ibn Hishâm Al-Ansârî and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). See further 19c, where it is shown that *fâhishah* includes *hatred and desertion, refractoriness*, etc. Though the word is used sometimes as meaning *fornication*, the context shows that here it is used to signify immoral conduct short of fornication, for the punishment of fornication is given in 24:2. The words of the verse that follows, referring to a similar immoral act with the indefinite nature of punishment, support

this conclusion, for punishment in the case of an act short of fornication would vary with the nature of the crime. Thus women guilty of immoral conduct are curtailed of their liberty. If they mend their ways, or being unmarried they get married, a way is opened for them by Allâh, and they regain their liberty; if they do not, the curtailment should be extended till they die. There is no proof for Palmer's assertion that "women taken in adultery or fornication were, at the beginning of Islâm, literally Immured".

16a. The crime spoken of in this verse is the same as that in the previous verse. The committers are two, and though the masculine gender is used, it does not imply that they are both necessarily males. *Slight punishment* is explained by *Qatâdah* as meaning *reproving with the tongue* (*Bahr al-Muhîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû 'Abd Allâh Abû Hayyân al-Undlusî). Islâm requires the utmost modesty in sexual relations.

The reference to repentance in connection with the mention of *fâhishah* is further proof that *fâhishah* does not here mean *fornication*, but some immorality short of that, for fornication is punishable criminally, and penitence on the part of those guilty of it cannot avert the punishment.

19 O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to take women as heritage against (their) will.^a Nor should you straiten them by taking part of what you have given them,^b unless they are guilty of manifest indecency.^c And treat them kindly. Then if you hate them, it may be that you dislike a thing while Allâh has placed abundant good in it.

20 And if you wish to have (one) wife in the place of another and you have given one of them a heap of gold, take nothing from it. Would you take it by slandering (her) and (doing her) manifest wrong?^a

18a. Verses 17 and 18 show that repentance, according to the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, implies an actual change in the course of one's life, not the mere utterance of words. In fact, the law stated here shows how repentance does away with sins. When the very course of a man's life is changed in respect of a particular sin, the tendency to that sin is uprooted. But those who continue their evil courses until death overtakes them cannot obtain the benefit of repentance, because there is no time left for them to improve themselves.

19a. Among the pre-Islamic Arabs, when a man died his elder son or other relations had a right to possess his widow or widows, marrying them themselves if they pleased, without settling a dowry on them, or marrying them to others, or prohibiting them from marriage altogether (Bukhârî 65: iv, 6).

19b. This passage remedies another evil. Those husbands who were dissatisfied with their wives were wont to give them trouble in order that they should be forced to claim a divorce and remit the dowry (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). This is disallowed. If the judge finds that the fault lies actually with the husband, he will not allow the dowry to be remitted in his favour.

19c. The exception is in reference to *taking part of the dowry*, the meaning being that part of the dowry can only be taken back if the woman is guilty of immoral conduct. The *manifest indecency* spoken of here is *hatred and desertion of the husband, refractoriness, and doing harm to the husband and his family* (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). In such cases, when the fault is with the woman, she may be required to return her dowry wholly or in part.

20a. “It is narrated that when a (married) man among them wanted to marry another wife in place of the first, he used to accuse the latter of adultery or other gross immorality, thus compelling her to obtain a divorce by paying a large sum of money” (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). *Having one wife in place of another* signifies *the divorcing of the first and marrying another*. This verse further shows that there is no limit to the dowry which may be settled on a wife; even a heap of gold may be given to her as dowry if the husband has got the means. When ‘Umar desired to ban big dowries, it was with the recitation of this verse that a woman in the audience silenced him, and he had to take back his orders saying that “the women of Madînah had more understanding than ‘Umar”.

21 And how can you take it when one of you has already gone in to the other and they have taken from you a strong covenant? *a*

22 And marry not women whom your fathers married, except what has already passed. This surely is indecent and hateful; and it is an evil way.^a

SECTION 4: What Women may be taken in Marriage

23 Forbidden to you are your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters, and your paternal aunts, and your maternal aunts, and brother's daughters and sister's daughters, and your mothers that have suckled you, and your foster-sisters, and mothers of your wives, and your stepdaughters who are in your guardianship (born) of your wives to whom you have gone in - but if you have not gone in to them, there is no blame on you – and the wives of your sons who are of your own loins; and that you should have two sisters together, except what has already passed. Surely Allâh is ever Forgiving, Merciful,^a

21a. Marriage is here called a *mîthâq* or a covenant or agreement between the husband and the wife. As there can be no agreement unless both parties give their consent to it, marriage in Islâm can only be contracted with the free consent of the two parties.

22a. As already pointed out, when a man died his widows were the property of the eldest son, and he could marry any of them that he liked. This immoral practice was abolished by this verse.

23a. For prohibited marriage relations in the Mosaic law see Leviticus 18:16-18.

Part 5

24 And all married women except those whom your right hands possess (are forbidden);^a (this is) Allâh's ordinance to you. And lawful for you are (all women) besides those, provided that you seek (them) with your property, taking (them) in marriage, not committing fornication. Then as to those whom you profit by (by marrying), give them their dowries as appointed. And there is no blame on you about what you mutually agree after what is appointed (of dowry).^b Surely Allâh is ever Knowing, Wise.

25 And whoever among you cannot afford to marry free believing women, (let him marry) such of your believing maidens as your right hands possess. And Allâh knows best your faith - you are (sprung) the one from the other. So marry them with the permission of their masters, and give them their dowries justly, they being chaste, not fornicating, nor receiving paramours; then if they are guilty of adultery when they are taken in marriage, they shall suffer half the punishment for free married women. This is for him among you who fears falling into evil. And that you abstain is better for you. And Allâh is Forgiving, Merciful.^a

24a. It is thus forbidden to a man that he should marry a woman who is already married. An exception is made, however, regarding *those whom your right hands possess*, by which expression are generally meant in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân *those who are taken prisoners in war*. It sometimes happened that such prisoners became converts to Islâm, and therefore they could not be sent back. Such women it was lawful to take in marriage, even though they might not have been divorced formally by their former husbands. The words *mâ malakat aimânu-kum* may, however, also mean *those whom you have lawfully taken in marriage*, because lawful possession is clearly implied in the word *aimân*, which signifies *covenant*, marriage also being a covenant. The meaning of the passage may therefore be that *all free women are prohibited to you except those whom you have lawfully married*.

24b. The husband and the wife are free to increase or decrease the amount of dowry fixed at the time of marriage by agreement among themselves. It should also be noted that Islâm does not allow temporary marriage. It recognizes only *ihsân*, taking a woman in permanent marriage, from the root *hasûna*, *it (a place) was inaccessible*, or (a woman) *was chaste or married* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), *ihsân* thus meaning *fortifying a place or marrying*. Whatever sexual relations are outside *ihsân* are denounced as *musâfiḥat* or *giving oneself up to debauchery*, from the root *safḥ*, meaning *spilling*. *Ihsân* gives rise to certain rights and obligations, which are established for life, but such rights and obligations do not arise in *musâfiḥat* or fornication and *mut'ah* which was a temporary marriage recognized in Arabia before the advent of Islâm. It seems that resort was had to *mut'ah* in one or two battles by some Muslims but it was expressly prohibited by the Prophet in the battle of Khaibar (Bukhârî 64:40).

SECTION 5: Women's Rights over their Earnings

26 Allâh desires to explain to you, and to guide you into the ways of those before you, and to turn to you (mercifully). And Allâh is Knowing, Wise.

25a. This verse lays down the conditions under which those taken prisoners in war may be taken in marriage. I do not find any verse in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân or any instance in the Prophet's life, sanctioning what is called *concubinage*. On more occasions than one, when the establishment of conjugal relations with slave-girls is

mentioned, their taking in marriage is clearly laid down as a condition as in verse 3, verse 24, and this verse. Here marriage with those taken prisoners in war is allowed under certain circumstances, the first of these being that they should be believing women or Muslims. There are two more conditions: (1) that a man has not the means to marry a free woman as the opening words show, and (2) that he fears to fall into evil as stated in the concluding words. If, then, even marriage with her is allowed under exceptional circumstances, it is quite unreasonable to suppose that her master is allowed to have conjugal relations with her without taking her for a wife. She was no doubt placed on a lower level in Arab society than a free woman, but that is all. Perhaps the strictness of the rules regarding marriage with a female slave is due to the consideration that he who seeks her in marriage may first have her freed from slavery.

It may be said that this verse speaks of others than the masters of the slave-girls, because it requires the permission of the masters. The only right the master could reasonably claim is that he does not require the permission of anybody else, yet he must still take her as a wife, not as a paramour. But see the Prophet's hadîth quoted in 5c, according to which the master is required to educate the slave girl, giving her the best education, then set her free and then marry her. One more point arising out of this verse may be noted. It is plainly laid down here that if a married slave-girl commits adultery; her punishment is half of the punishment prescribed for the free married woman who commits adultery. This shows that the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân never contemplated *stoning* as the punishment for adultery because it could not be halved, and as a matter of fact the Holy Book nowhere speaks of stoning; the only punishment for adultery that it speaks of is a hundred stripes (24:2) .

27 And Allâh desires to turn to you (mercifully). And those who follow (their) lusts desire that you should deviate (with) a great deviation.

28 Allâh desires to make light your burdens,^a and man is created weak.^b

29 O you who believe, devour not your property among yourselves by illegal methods except that it be trading by your mutual consent.^a And kill not your people. Surely Allâh is ever Merciful to you.

30 And whoso does this aggressively and unjustly, We shall soon cast him into fire. And this is ever easy for Allâh.

31 If you shun the great things which you are forbidden, We shall do away with your evil (inclinations)^a and cause you to enter an honourable place of entering.

28a. Not only is the rigour of the Jewish and other previous laws greatly modified in Islâm, but all principles of right action are stated with such completeness, devoid of unnecessary details, that the real burden of man is actually much more lightened in Islâm than in any other religion. It, moreover, points out the right way for man's freedom from the bondage of sin, and thus reduces his burden, not by false assurance, but by actually saving him from falling into evil ways.

28b. These verses speak of Allâh's great mercy in having shown man the way to truth and guidance, for man, being created weak, could not chalk out a way for himself which was free from error. That is all that man's weakness here signifies.

29a. In the first part of this verse all illegal methods of acquiring property are forbidden, but the seeking of gain one from another by trading, which implies mutual consent, is allowed, being a legal method. Though the words are general, the passage is particularly directed to guard women's right to property, because it was women's and Orphans' property that was generally devoured aggressively and unjustly.

The second part forbids the killing of *anfusa-kum*, which means *your people* or *yourselves*. In the first case, the significance is that life must also be protected; in the second case, it is an injunction against suicide which according to the law of Islâm is a grave sin.

31a. *Sayyi'ah* or *sû'* signifies *an evil deed* as well as *an evil affection* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The context requires the latter significance to be adopted here. All that is meant is that if a man avoids the commission of sins, the evil inclinations within him die also. Division of sin into *kabîrah* and *saghîrah* is unwarranted.

32 And covet not that by which Allâh has made some of you excel others. For men is the benefit of what they earn. And for women is the benefit of what they earn. And ask Allâh of His grace. Surely Allâh is ever Knower of all things.

33 And to everyone We have appointed heirs^a of that which parents and near relatives leave. And as to those with whom your right hands have ratified agreements, give them their due.^b Surely Allâh is ever Witness over all things.

SECTION 6: Disagreement between Husband and Wife

34 Men are the maintainers^a of women, with what Allâh has made some of them to excel others and with what they spend out of their wealth. So the good women are obedient,^b guarding the unseen^c as Allâh has guarded.^d And (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the beds and chastise them. So if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Surely Allâh is ever Exalted, Great.^e

33a. *Mawâlî* is plural of *maulâ*, which conveys a number of significances, such as *lord or chief, a cousin, a freed man, a slave, an heir*. The last of these significances is adopted here by the best authorities (Bukhârî 65: IV, 7), and only this suits the context.

33b. In the pre-Islamic days, people were accustomed to enter into covenants one with another, by which they undertook to defend and inherit one another; and when one of them died, the other was considered entitled to one-sixth of the property of the deceased (*Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû ‘Abd Allâh Abû Hayyân al-Undlusî). When the Muslims fled to Madînah, the Prophet made every Makkan emigrant enter into a close relationship of brotherhood with one of the Madînah citizens, so that under the old custom one of them would have become an heir to the other on his decease. Inheritance was abolished by this verse, and the words *give them their due* mean *the rendering of assistance* in general, *doing acts of kindness and the giving of good advice*, while something may be settled by testament (Bukhârî 39:2).

34a. *Qâma-l-rajulu ‘ala-l-mar’ati* means *he maintained her and managed her affair, having charge of her affair*; hence he is said to be her *qawwâm*, i.e. *maintainer* (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faîḍ Murtaḍâ). Similarly, *qâma bi-l-yatîmi* means *he maintained the orphan* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Hence by the men being *qawwâmûn* is only meant that they are the maintainers of women with that which Allâh has made some to excel others.

34b. Obedience here signifies obedience to Allâh. This significance of the word is made clear by a comparison with 33:31, 33:35, and 66:5.

35 And if you fear a breach between the two, appoint an arbiter from his people and an arbiter from her people. If they both desire agreement, Allâh will affect harmony between them. Surely Allâh is ever Knowing, Aware.^a

34c. *Guarding the unseen* is a euphemism for *guarding the husband's rights*. The two qualifications of a good wife as given here are her piety or obedience to Allâh and chastity.

34d. The meaning is that their guarding the husband's rights is really a favour from Allâh as it is Allâh that guards them. Or the meaning may be, *Allâh has guarded their rights*.

34e. The word *nushûz*, which I have translated as *desertion*, primarily means *rising*, and as spoken of a woman in connection with her husband it means *her rising against her husband*. This is explained in a number of ways; according to one of these explanations it means *her leaving the husband's place and taking up an abode which he does not like* (*Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû 'Abd Allâh Abû Hayyân al-Undlusî). The *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane quotes various authorities showing that *nushûz* on the part of the woman means that *the wife resisted her husband and hated him* (*Al-Sihâḥ Tâj al-Lughah wa Sihâḥ al-'Arabiyyah* (Dictionary) by Ismâ'îl ibn Hammâd al-Jawharî and the *Al-Qâmûs al-Muhîṭ* (Dictionary), by Shaikh Majd al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Ya'qûb Al-Firozâbâdî) and *deserted him* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm Muḥibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faîd Murtaḍâ) .

The remedy pointed out in the case of the wife's desertion is threefold. At first she is only to be admonished. If she desists, the evil is mended, but if she persists in the wrong course, her bed is to be separated. If she still persists, chastisement is permitted as a last resort (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). Regarding this last remedy two things must, however, be borne in mind. Firstly it is a mere permission, and sayings of the Prophet make it clear that, though allowed, it was discouraged in practice. Thus the Prophet is reported to have said, on the complaint of certain women as to the ill-treatment of their husbands: "You will not find these men as the best among you" (*Kitâb al-Sunan* (*Ḥadîṭh*), by Abû Dâwûd Sulaimân 12:42). According to Shâfi'î, it is preferable not to resort to chastisement of the wife (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). In fact, as the injunctions of the Qur'ân are wide in their scope, the example of the Holy Prophet and his constant exhortations for kind treatment towards women, so much so that he made a man's good treatment of his wife the gauge of his goodness in general - *the best of you is he who is best to his wife* - show clearly that this permission is meant only for that

type of men and women who belong to a low grade of society. Secondly, even this permission cannot be adopted indiscriminately, for sayings of the Holy Prophet make it quite evident that chastisement, when resorted to in extreme cases, must be very slight. ‘*Abd Allâh ibn ‘Abbâs* (Companion) says it may be with a toothbrush or something like it (*Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû ‘Abd Allâh Abû *Ḥayyân* al-Undlusî). The Prophet is reported to have said: “You have a right in the matter of your wives that they do not allow anyone whom you do not like to come into your houses; if they do this, chastise them in such a manner that it should not leave an impression” (*Al-Jâmi‘* (Ḥadîth), by Abû ‘Îsâ Muḥammad ibn ‘Îsâ *Tirmidhî* 10:11). Thus very slight chastisement was allowed only in extreme cases.

36 And serve Allâh, and associate naught with Him, and be good to the parents and to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the neighbour of (your) kin and the alien neighbour,^a and the companion in a journey and the wayfarer and those whom your right hands possess.^b Surely Allâh loves not such as are proud, boastful,

37 Who are niggardly and bid people to be niggardly and hide that which Allâh has given them out of His grace. And We have prepared for the disbelievers an abasing chastisement -

38 And those who spend their wealth to be seen of men and believe neither in Allâh nor in the Last Day. And as for him whose companion is the *shaitân*, an evil companion is he!

35a. This verse lays down the procedure to be adopted when a case for divorce arises. It is not for the husband to put away his wife; it is the business of the judge to decide the case. Nor should divorce cases be made too public. The judge is required to appoint two arbiters, one belonging to the wife’s family and the other to the husband’s. These two arbiters will find out the facts, but their objective must be to effect reconciliation between the parties. If all hopes of reconciliation fail, a divorce is allowed, but the final decision for divorce rests with the judge who is legally entitled to pronounce a divorce. Cases were decided in accordance with the directions contained in this verse in the early days of Islâm. See an instance quoted by *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî regarding ‘Alî’s decision in a case of breach. The husband was told in plain words that he must abide by the judgment of the arbiters appointed under this verse.

36a. *The neighbour of kin* may mean *a neighbour who is a relative or a Muslim neighbour*, and *the alien neighbour* is either *a neighbour not related or a neighbour of an alien religion* (*Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû ‘Abd Allâh Abû Ḥayyân al-Undlusî). The latter phrase (the qualifying word being derived from *janb*, meaning *a side*) signifies, according to lexicologists, *the person who is one’s neighbour but who belongs to another people* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Thus the charity of Islâm is not limited to one’s own people or one’s own co-religionists, but is extended to aliens also.

36b. By *those whom your right hands possess* are meant *all those with whose care a man is entrusted*, so that it includes even animals over which a man has control (*Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû ‘Abd Allâh Abû Ḥayyân al-Undlusî and the *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). While dealing with the rights of women, the Qur’ân generalizes the law of doing good to others, so much so that it requires goodness to be extended even to a fellow-traveller or to a mere wayfarer. If even companions whose company is so short-lived are to be treated generously, how generous must a man be to her who is the companion of his whole life!

39 And what (harm) would it do them if they believe in Allâh and the Last Day and spend of that which Allâh has given them? And Allâh is ever Knower of them.

40 Surely Allâh wrongs not the weight of an atom; and if it is a good deed, He multiplies it and gives from Himself a great reward.^a

41 But how will it be when We bring from every people a witness and bring thee as a witness against these?^a

42 On that day will those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger desire that the earth were levelled with them. And they can hide no fact from Allâh.

SECTION 7: Purification of the nafs

43 O you who believe, go not near prayer when you are intoxicated till you know what you say,^a nor after sexual intercourse^b - except you are merely passing by^c - until you have bathed. And if you are sick, or on a journey, or one of you come from the privy, or you have touched the women,^d and you cannot find water, betake

yourselves to pure earth,^e then wipe your faces and your hands. Surely Allâh is ever Pardoning, Forgiving.

40a. Such is the ever-recurring description of the preponderance of mercy in Divine nature: good is always multiplied and evil nullified. The constant multiplication of good shows no doubt that good must ultimately preponderate in the universe, and thus the Divine laws working in nature point to the fact that the universe is moving towards the goal of ultimate good.

41a. The prophet sent to a people is frequently spoken of as being *a witness* (Arabic *shahîd*) in respect of them, and by *these* are here meant the followers of the Holy Prophet, or the community of Muḥammad. It is stated in the *ḥadīth* that this chapter was being recited before the Prophet and when the reciter came to this verse, tears flowed from the eyes of the Prophet and he said; “My *Rabb*, I can bear witness about those among whom I am living, but what about those whom I have not seen” (Ibn Kathîr) . From this it appears that the people spoken of here are Muslims who disobey the Prophet, and hence the Prophet’s anxiety for the later generations of his followers. This is in fact made clear in the verse that follows in the words *those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger*. Disobedience amounts to disbelief in practice.

44 See you not those to whom a portion of the Book was given? They buy error and desire to make you err from the (right) way.

43a. There is some difference of opinion as to what is meant by *sukârâ* here. Literally, the singular *sakarân* signifies *one intoxicated*, but while some consider the meaning here to be *intoxicated with drink*, others think it to be *intoxicated with sleep*, (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muḥibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faiḍ Murtaḍâ* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). And *sakr*, no doubt, may be applied in the latter sense, for its literal significance is *stopping up* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The word is also applied to *confusion of judgment* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The Arabic Glorious Qur’ân speaks of *sakrat al-maut* (50:19) or the condition when one loses his senses at the approach of death. *Sakrat al-hamma* means the condition in which a person loses his senses on account of extreme grief. *Sakrat al-naum* is the condition when on account of the

oppressive sensation of sleep one is not in full possession of one's senses. The word as used here may carry any of these senses.

The prohibition against praying when intoxicated was a step towards the total prohibition of drink, for the necessity of going to prayer five times a day would afford little opportunity for indulgence in drink. The verse makes it further clear that one must know the significance of what one says when praying to Allâh.

43b. The word *junub* (from *janb*, meaning *a side*) should not be translated as *impure* or *polluted*; it is a purely technical term, and means *one who is under an obligation to perform a total ablution or bathing* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The connection with the root-meaning is that the person under such obligation is *on a side* or *remote from prayer* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî). When one such person, a *junub*, described himself as *najs* (*polluted* or *defiled*) in the presence of the Prophet, the latter corrected him, saying: "Glory to Allâh! A believer is not *najs* (or *defiled*)" (Bukhârî 5:23). The necessity to perform a total ablution arises in case of emission of seminal fluid due to sexual intercourse or *pollutio nocturna*.

43c. *Going near prayer* may signify *going into mosques* ('*Abd Allâh ibn 'Abbâs* (Companion) and the *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî), and the meaning in that case would be *unless you pass (through the mosques) as by a way*.

43d. The *touching of women* is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Many of the fine phrases used in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân to express this delicate relation were unknown to the Arabs; words and forms were adopted which would not shock the most delicate ears.

43e. *Sa'id* means *high* or *elevated* ground, hence generally *land* or *ground* or *surface of the earth*, whether it be *dust* or *earth* or *otherwise* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). *Tayammum* (from *amma*, meaning *he repaired*) means striking both hands on pure earth, or anything containing pure dust, and then passing the hands over the face and the backs of the hands. When water is not found, or is likely to do harm, *tayammum* suffices instead of ablution before prayer.

45 And Allâh best knows your enemies. And Allâh is sufficient as a Friend and Allâh is sufficient as a Helper.

46 Some of those who became Jews alter words from their places^a and say, We have heard and we disobey; and (say), Hear without being made to hear, and (say), *Râ 'i-nâ*, distorting with their tongues and slandering *Dîn*. And if they had said, We hear and we obey, and hearken, and *unzûur-nâ*,^b it would have been better for them and more upright; but Allâh has cursed them on account of their disbelief, so they believe not but a little.

47 O you who have been given the Book, believe in what We have revealed, verifying that which you have, before We destroy the leaders and turn them on their backs, or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath - breakers.^a And the command of Allâh is ever executed.

48 Surely Allâh forgives not that a partner should be set up with Him, and forgives all besides that to whom He pleases. And whoever sets up a partner with Allâh, he devises indeed a great sin.^a

46a. The corruption of the previous books is constantly referred to in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, and, as the words clearly show, it implies a corruption of the text as well as a false rendering of it. The subject of the perversion of "holy writ" is specially dealt with in 2:75-79, 5:13, 41, and here; see 2:79a. The verification referred to in verse 47 and elsewhere implies only verification of the general principles and particularly of the prophecies contained in those books.

46b. See 2:104a.

47a. The word *wujûh* (sing., *wajh*) may mean either *faces* or *chiefs* and *leaders* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain *al-Râghib al-Isfahânî*, under *tams*) while *tams* means *obliteration* or *destruction* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain *al-Râghib al-Isfahânî*). The *obliteration of faces* is evidently a metaphorical expression meaning *depriving them of greatness and prosperity and bringing on them disgrace and adversity* (*Anwâr al-Tanzîl wa Asrâr al-Ta'wîl* (Commentary), by Qâzî Abû Sa'îd 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Umar al-Baidâwî). The same idea is intensified in *turning them on their backs*. The reference here is supposed to be to their ultimate banishment from Arabia.

The second form of punishment is their being overtaken by the curse which overtook the Sabbath-breakers, for which see 2:65b.

49 Have you not seen those who attribute purity to themselves? Nay, Allâh purifies whom He pleases, and they will not be wronged a whit.^a

50 See how they forge lies against Allâh! And sufficient is this as a manifest sin.^a

SECTION 8: Kingdom granted to Ibrâhîm's Descendants

51 Have you not seen those to whom a portion of the Book was given? They believe in sorcery^a and diviners and say of those who disbelieve: These are better guided in the path than those who believe.

48a. *Shirk* or setting up partners with Allâh is spoken of as the gravest sin. A human being's wrong belief does not in any way detract from the glory of Allâh, but a belief in false deities lowers the dignity of human being. Human beings is made to rule nature itself and all creatures, but when he lowers himself before creatures lower than himself whom he was really made to rule, he sets at naught the very purpose of his creation. It should be noted that *shirk* or setting up deities with Allâh does not only mean idol-worship or worship of the forces of nature or a belief in the Divinity of mortals, but also includes the blind obedience which is rendered to great men; see 9:31a and also the next footnote. It should be further remembered that the forgiveness spoken of here relates to those who die while guilty of *shirk*, but even they will be received into the mercy of Allâh after suffering the consequences of their deeds. If a man is guilty of *shirk* and repents of it before his death all his sins including *shirk* are washed off and forgiven because he gives a new turn to his life.

49a. *Fatîl* means originally *pellicle of a date stone* or *dirt of the skin rolled between the fingers*; hence *a very small thing* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The reference in *those who attribute purity to themselves* is to such doctors of law and monks (9:31) (as also to '*ulamâ* or *pîrs* to be met with among Muslims) who consider themselves to be above their votaries from whom they demand blind obedience to themselves. Hence such people are spoken of in connection with the mention of setting up partners with Allâh in the previous verse.

50a. Laying claim to purity for themselves is here called *a manifest sin*.

51a. *Jibt* means *an idol* or *idols* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane): 'Umar said, it means sorcery (*Bukhârî* 65: IV, 10). Some consider it to be the same word as *jibs*, which means *a worthless thing* (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by

Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî), or *a thing in which there is no good*. For *tâghût* see 2:256b. Here it is explained as meaning *kâhin* or *diviner*: Jâbir said that every tribe had its own diviner (Bukhârî 65: IV, 10). It is related that in making a compact with the Quraish the **Jews** worshipped their idols (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). But the words seem to refer to the general debasement of the **Jews**, who believed in all kinds of enchantment, divination, and sorcery, and had long bidden farewell in practice to the pure monotheism of Mûsâ.

52 Those are they whom Allâh has cursed. And whomever Allâh curses, thou wilt not find a helper for him.

53 Or have they a share in the kingdom? But then they would not give to people even the speck on a date-stone.^a

54 Or do they envy the people for that which Allâh has given them of His grace? But indeed We have given to Ibrâhîm's children the Book and the Wisdom, and We have given them a grand kingdom.^a

55 So of them^a is he who believes in him, and of them is he who turns away from him.^b And Hell is sufficient to burn.

56 Those who disbelieve in Our Messages, We shall make them enter Fire. As often as their skins are burned, We shall change them for other skins,^a that they may taste the chastisement. Surely Allâh is ever Mighty, Wise.

53a. The reference is apparently to the temporal and spiritual kingdom which was promised to Ibrâhîm's seed, as clearly stated in the next verse. The Jews had been deprived of both. Love of wealth had debased them to such an extent that they were not fit for even temporal kingdom which could not be granted to a people who would not deal liberally with others.

54a. By the *people* are meant the Arabs. The promised kingdom was still in Ibrâhîm's seed, but was now transferred from the descendants of Isrâ'îl to those of Isma'îl, in accordance with the covenant made with Ibrâhîm; see 2:124a.

55a. The children of Ibrâhîm, among whom were the children of Isrâ'îl, are meant.

55b. The personal pronoun is for the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, who was now the true exponent of Ibrâhîm's religion.

56a. The form used signifies the continuance of the torment in accordance with the metaphor of fire.

57 And those who believe and do good deeds, We shall make them enter Gardens wherein flow rivers, to abide in them forever. For them therein are pure companions and We shall make them enter a pleasant shade.^a

58 Surely Allâh commands you to make over trusts^a to those worthy of them, and that when you judge between people, you judge with justice. Surely Allâh admonishes you with what is excellent. Surely Allâh is ever Hearing, Seeing.

59 O you who believe, obey Allâh and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allâh and the Messenger, if you believe in Allâh and the Last Day.^a This is best and more suitable to (achieve) the end.^b

57a. *Zill* implies *mightiness* and *inaccessibility* and also *a state of ease*: the words are used here in allusion to *happiness* and *pleasantness* of life (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî).

58a. This section deals with the granting of kingdom to the Muslims, who are here required to entrust the affairs of State to people who are worthy of this responsibility. The words that follows, requiring judges to be just, corroborate this significance, the whole verse stating the reciprocal duties of the governed and the governors. Explaining the word *am.nat* (sing. of *amânat*, the word occurring here and translated *trusts*), 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Abbâs (Companion) said that it means *duties* (*Lisân al-'Arab* (Dictionary), by 'Allâmah Abu-l-Faḍl Jamâl al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Mukarram). The Prophet himself explained the word *amânat* as meaning *Government* or *affairs of State*. "The Prophet said, When the *am.nat* (trust) is wasted, wait for the *sâ'ah*, i.e. *the hour* or the *doom*. It was said, How will the trust be wasted, O Messenger of Allâh? He said, When Government is entrusted to those unworthy of it, then wait for the doom" (Bukhârî 81:35).

59a. This verse lays down three important rules of guidance in matters relating to the welfare of the Muslim community and especially in those relating to affairs of State. These are obedience to Allâh and His Messenger in the first place; secondly, obedience to those in authority from among the Muslims; and thirdly, referring

matters to Allâh and His Messenger in cases of dispute with those in authority. Allâh and His Messenger are thus the final authority. This is explained in the Hadîth. “To hear and obey,” said the Prophet, “is binding so long as one is not commanded to disobey Allâh; when one is commanded to disobey Allâh, he shall not hear or obey (the authorities)” (Bukhârî 56:108) . The words *ulu-l-amr*, meaning *those in authority*, have a wide significance, so that in different matters relating to the life of man different persons would be in authority. Thus the commander of a section of the army was considered as one in authority (Bukhârî 65: IV, 11). Temporal authorities are to be obeyed in secular matters while religious authorities must be obeyed in religious matters. It is especially in matters religious that differences would arise, in which case it would be necessary to refer the matter to Allâh and His Messenger; in other words to the Qur’ân and Hadîth. The great Imâm Abû Hanîfah is himself reported to have said: “Give up my word for the Word of Allâh; give up my word for the word of the Messenger of Allâh.

As regards the secular authorities, the rule is laid down in the Hadîth that “the authority of those entrusted with it should not be disputed, unless,” the Prophet added, “you see an act of open disbelief in which you have a clear argument from Allâh” (Bukhârî 93:2) .

The words of the verse speak only of those in authority *from among you*, and the question therefore arises, what should the Muslims do in case they have to live under non-Muslim authority? In such a case the Prophet’s own example in his relations with Abyssinia is a sufficient guide. About a hundred of the companions were advised by the Prophet to seek shelter in the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia where they lived for about ten years subject to the laws of the land. The rule is, however, laid down in clear words as already quoted that “when one is commanded to disobey Allâh, he shall not hear or obey the authorities”.

SECTION 9: The Prophet must be Obeyed

60 Have you not seen those who assert that they believe in that which has been revealed to you and that which was revealed before you? They desire to seek the judgment of the *taghût*,^a though they have been commanded to deny him. And the *shaitân* desires to lead them far astray.

61 And when it is said to them, Come to that which Allâh has revealed and to the Messenger, thou seest the hypocrites turning away from thee with aversion.

59b. *Ta'wîl* (from *âla*, *he returned*) signifies *interpretation*, because the words are *returned* to their sense. But from the same original sense of *returning* follows its use in the sense of *marja'*, i.e. *final sequel*, and *'âqibah*, i.e. *issue, end, results* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), and this is the significance which suits the context here.

60a. For *taghûl* see 2:256b. The people spoken of here are the hypocrites as made clear in the verse that follows. The reference here is said to be to Ka'b, son of Ashraf, a Jew; others think it is to Abû Bardah, a diviner; others consider the *taghûl* here to be a particular *idol* or *idols generally*, to whom disputes were taken to be decided by divination (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). The hypocrites inclined to idols, or the diviners who, being their leaders in "devil-worship", are called *shayâtîn*.

62 But how is it that when a misfortune befalls them on account of that which their hands have sent before, they come to thee swearing by Allâh: We desired naught but good and concord?

63 These are they, the secrets of whose hearts Allâh knows; so turn aside from them and admonish them and speak to them effective words concerning themselves.^a

64 And We sent no messenger but that he should be obeyed by Allâh's command. And had they, when they wronged themselves, come to you and asked forgiveness of Allâh, and the Messenger had (also) asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allâh Oft-returning (to mercy), merciful.

65 But no, by your *Rabb!* they believe not until they make you a judge of what is in dispute between them, then find not any straitness in their hearts as to that which you decide and submit with full submission.

66 And if We had enjoined them, Lay down your lives^a or go forth from your homes, they would not have done it except a few of them. And if they had done what they are exhorted to do, it would certainly have been better for them and more strengthening:

63a. A person is said to be *balîgh* (from *balagha*, meaning *he attained the utmost point to which he directed his course*) who is *chaste in speech* or *effective* or

penetrating in tongue. Applied to a saying, it also signifies *an effectual speech* or *a speech producing an effect* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

66a. The companions of the Prophet had to lay down their lives in defence of their faith, and had to leave their homes for the sake of their religion. But the hypocrites at Madīnah were too weak of heart to undergo such hardships. They were only required to contribute to the struggle which was being carried on for national defence and to obey the Prophet's orders which was a far easier task, but they did not do even this.

67 And then We would certainly have given them from Ourselves a great reward,

68 And We would certainly have guided them in the right path.

69 And whoever obeys Allāh and the Messenger, they are with those upon whom Allāh has bestowed favours from among the prophets and the truthful and the faithful and the righteous, and a goodly company are they!^a

70 Such is the grace from Allāh, and Allāh is sufficient as Knower.

69a. Those upon whom Allāh has bestowed favours are spoken of as belonging to four classes: (1) The prophets. (2) The truthful - the original word *siddīq* literally means *one who is always truthful* and in the religious language *one who is true in his saying and his belief, and who confirms his truth by his deed or acting* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). (3) The faithful - the original word *shahīd* means *one who bears witness to the truth of the religion of Allāh*, both by his words and deeds, and one slain in defence of his religion is included because he too gives evidence of the truth of religion by laying down his life. (4) The righteous or those who stick to the right course in all their deeds, come what may.

Those who obey Allāh and the Messenger are here told that they are *with* the perfect ones who belong to the four classes, the prophets, the truthful, the faithful and the righteous. The significance is clear. They have not attained to the perfection of these four classes of the perfect ones, yet they are *with* them, i.e., they will be in their company in the life to come. The Prophet's sayings make it clear. He is reported to have said; "The truthful and honest merchant is with the prophets, the truthful and the faithful" (*Al-Jāmi'* (Ḥadīth), by Abū 'Īsā Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā *Tirmidhī* 12:4). It does not mean that an honest merchant becomes a prophet, but that he is in the company of the prophets. According to another ḥadīth, the Prophet was asked about a person who loves a people but is not one of them, and he replied that *a man is with those whom he*

loves (Bukhârî 78:96). And Anas is reported to have said: "I love the Messenger of Allâh and I love Abû Bakr and 'Umar and I hope that Allâh will raise me with them, though I have not done the deeds which they did" (Bukhârî 62:6). Thus this verse promises to those who have not attained to perfection the company of those who have attained to perfection when the former have done their best to obey Allâh and His Messenger.

At any rate none can become a prophet by obeying the Prophet. If this were true, not only would all the truthful and the faithful and the righteous be prophets, because they perfectly obeyed Allâh and His Messenger, but even all those who tried to follow them would have been raised to the dignity of prophethood which is absurd on the face of it. And to talk of some people becoming prophets after the door to prophethood has been closed is sheer ignorance of the basic principles laid down by the Holy Book.

SECTION 10: **Believers must defend themselves**

71 O you who believe, take your precautions, then go forth in detachments or go forth in a body.

72 And among you is he who would hang back. Then if a misfortune befalls you he says: Allâh indeed bestowed a favour on me as I was not present with them.

73 And if bounty from Allâh comes to you, he would cry, as if there were no friendship between you and him: Would that I had been with them, then I should have achieved a mighty success!

74 So let those fight in the way of Allâh who sell this world's life for the Hereafter. And whoever fights in the way of Allâh, be he slain or be he victorious, We shall grant him a mighty reward.

75 And what reason have you not to fight in the way of Allâh, and of the weak among the men and the women and the children, who say: Our *Rabb*, take us out of this town, whose people are oppressors, and grant us from You a friend, and grant us from You a helper!^a

76 Those who believe fight in the way of Allâh, and those who disbelieve fight in the way of the devil. So fight against the friends of the *tâghût* (those with evil inclinations); surely the struggle of the *shaitân* is ever weak.^a

75a. This verse explains what is meant by fighting in the way of Allâh. While most of the believers who had the means had escaped from Makkah, which is here spoken of as the city *whose people are oppressors*, there remained those who were weak and unable to undertake a journey. These were still persecuted and oppressed by the Makkans, as is clearly shown by the words of the verse, and not only men, but even women and young children, were persecuted. Fighting to deliver them from the persecution of the oppressors was really fighting in the way of Allâh. The next verse shows that these very oppressors are spoken of as fighting in the way of the devil.

SECTION 11: Attitude of the Hypocrites

77 Have you not seen those to whom it was said: Withhold your hands, and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate. But when fighting is prescribed for them, lo! A party of them fear men as they ought to fear Allâh, or with a greater fear, and say: Our *Rabb*, why have You ordained fighting for us? Would You not grant us respite to a near term?^a Say: The enjoyment of this world is short, and the Hereafter is better for him who keeps his duty. And you shall not be wronged a whit.

78 Wherever you are, death will overtake you, though you are in towers, raised high. And if good befalls them, they say: This is from Allâh; and if a misfortune befalls them, they say: This is from thee. Say: All is from Allâh. But what is the matter with these people that they make no effort to understand anything?

79 Whatever good befalls you (O man), it is from Allâh, and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from yourself.^a And We have sent you (O Prophet) to mankind as a Messenger. And Allâh is sufficient as a witness.

76a. This is a prophecy that those who are siding with the devil and are fighting against the Truth will ultimately be vanquished.

77a. The injunction to fight was distasteful, and more particularly so to those who were weak in faith. Had there been any hope of plunder to animate the ranks of Muslims, those who loved this world most (who are here called the hypocrites) would have been foremost in fighting; but as they knew that they were fighting against odds, they considered the execution of this order as equivalent to courting death, and requested to be granted a respite until they died a natural death.

80 Whoever obeys the Messenger, he indeed obeys Allâh. And whoever turns away, We have not sent thee as a keeper over them.

81 And they say: Obedience. But when they go out from your presence, a party of them plan by night doing otherwise than what you say.^a And Allâh writes down what they plan by night, so turn aside from them and trust in Allâh. And Allâh is sufficient as having charge of affairs.

82 Will they not then meditate on the Qur'ân? And if it were from any other than Allâh, they would have found in it many a discrepancy.^a

79a. Good and evil, or benefits and misfortunes, proceed from Allâh; but while He sends benefits from Himself, i.e. out of His beneficence, no evil or misfortune afflicts a human being unless his own hands have called for it. There is no discrepancy in the two statements, the one made at the end of the last verse - *All is from Allâh* - and the other made here. The previous verse states that the hypocrites attributed their misfortunes to the Prophet; they are told that misfortunes were sent by Allâh. This verse tells them that, though sent by Allâh, the immediate cause of these misfortunes was to be found in their own doings.

81a. The reference here is to the secret counsels of the hypocrites, who were always plotting against the Prophet while they kept an appearance of obedience to him.

82a. The Qur'ân was not written out and given on one occasion, but it continued to be delivered in small portions during twenty-three years under the most varying circumstances. From the solitary recluse of the cave of Hirâ, the Prophet had to pass through such a variety of circumstances to be the sole monarch and legislator of the whole of Arabia, that the life of no other individual human being affords us such a varying study. It is quite true that the earlier revelation deals mostly with such problems as Divine Unity and Majesty and the responsibility of human actions in general, while the later revelation had to deal with a large number of questions relating to the social and moral well-being of society; but what strikes one throughout the entire revelation is that it keeps up one and the same strain - absolute submission to Allâh, entire trust in Him, perfect confidence of future success, a liberal view of humanity, an attitude of charity towards all nations and ways of life, and goodness to all alike. The essence of the revelations to the solitary, persecuted, and rejected preacher of Makkah does not differ in these and a hundred other particulars from the essence of the revelations to the sole temporal and devotional monarch of Arabia. There are no discrepancies even in the details of narratives - such, for instance, as are

met with in the Bible - and this is especially true of the numerous prophecies which were uttered by the Prophet when an absolutely helpless man. Had they not proceeded from the Omniscient Being, Who knows the future as He knows the past, they could certainly not have been free from numerous discrepancies.

83 But if any news of security or fear comes to them, they spread it abroad. And if they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those of them who can search out knowledge of it would have known it. And were it not for the grace of Allâh upon you and His mercy, you would certainly have followed the *shaitân* save a few.^a

84 Fight then in Allâh's way – you are not responsible except for yourself; and urge on the believers. It may be that Allâh will restrain the fighting of those who disbelieve. And Allâh is stronger in prowess and stronger to give exemplary punishment.^a

85 Whoever intercedes in a good cause has a share of it, and whoever intercedes in an evil cause has a portion of it . And Allâh is ever Keeper over all things.^a

86 And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with one better than it, or return it.^a Surely Allâh ever takes account of all things.

83a. Divine grace and mercy were manifested by raising a prophet who delivered them from the bondage of sin and from the slavery of the *shaitân*.

84a. These words show how great the confidence of the Prophet was in the ultimate triumph of the noble cause with which he was entrusted. The primary duty to defend Islâm *lay on him alone*, as against all the hosts of Arabia. This shows that he never put any trust in the prowess of his followers, and his confidence was based solely on Divine help. With no material resources, he was sure not only that he would be able to restrain the fighting of his powerful opponents, but also that they would meet with condign punishment at his hands.

85a. The meaning is that *he who joins himself to another and assists him, and becomes to him as one of a pair or an intercessor in doing good or evil, and thus aids him and strengthens him, partakes with him the benefit or the harm of it* (Al-Mufradât fî *Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî). It is also held by some that *shafâ'at* here implies “that one institutes for another a way of good or a way of evil, which the other imitates, and

thus becomes to him as if he were one of a pair” (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The connection is clear; the Prophet made himself an example of good for others to imitate or to aid him. For the meaning of *shafâ‘at*, see 2:48b.

87 Allâh, there is no god but He - He will certainly gather you together on the Resurrection day, there is no doubt in it. And who is more true in word than Allâh?

SECTION 12: How to deal with the Hypocrites

88 Why should you, then, be two parties in relation to the hypocrites while Allâh has made them return (to disbelief) for what they have earned? Do you desire to guide him whom Allâh leaves in error? And whomsoever Allâh leaves in error thou canst not find a way for him.^a

89 They long that you should disbelieve as they have disbelieved so that you might be on the same level; so take not from among them friends until they flee (their homes) in Allâh’s way. Then if they turn back (to hostility), seize them and kill them wherever you find them, and take neither friend nor helper from among them,

90 Except those who join a people between whom and you there is an alliance, or who come to you, their hearts shrinking from fighting you or fighting their own people. And if Allâh had pleased, He would have given them power over you, so that they would have fought you. So if they withdraw from you and fight you not and offer you peace, then Allâh allows you no way against them.^a

86a. A greeting is a prayer for the good of another, *tahīyyah* being originally *a prayer for one’s long life*. The Islamic greeting is *al-salâmu ‘alai-kum*, which means *peace be to you*, so that when two Muslims meet they are required to pray for one another’s good. The minimum requirement is that a greeting must be returned in the same words. Hence the other party says *wa ‘alaikum al-salâm*, meaning *and to you be peace*. But it is recommended that the greeting should be returned in better words, and hence, to the words of the reply are added the words *wa raḥmatu-llâhi wa barakâtuh*, i.e. *and the mercy of Allâh and His blessings*. But what is really aimed at is that a Muslim should always wish good for, or do good to, his brother, and the other is required to do greater good in return.

88a. Clearly those waverers are implied here who went back to disbelief after they accepted Islâm, and thus again joined the disbelievers. As to their identity, there are six different conjectures, and I need not puzzle the reader with these.

91 You will find others who desire to be secure from you and secure from their own people. Whenever they are made to return to hostility, they are plunged into it.^a So if they withdraw not from you, nor offer you peace and restrain their hands, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them. And against these We have given you a clear authority.

SECTION 13: **Murderer of a Muslim**

92 And a believer would not kill a believer except by mistake.^a And he who kills a believer by mistake should free a believing slave, and blood-money should be paid to his people unless they remit it as alms. But if he be from a tribe hostile to you and he is a believer, the freeing of a believing slave (suffices). And if he be from a tribe between whom and you there is a covenant, the blood-money should be paid to his people along with the freeing of a believing slave; but he who has not the means should fast for two months successively: a penance from Allâh. And Allâh is ever Knowing, Wise.

90a. This verse explains the previous one, showing clearly that even waverers were not to be killed or fought against if they refrained from fighting, though they may have gone over to disbelief after accepting Islâm. The commentators agree that the persons referred to in this verse were disbelievers and not Muslims, and they are generally supposed to have been the Banî Mudlaj (*Anwâr al-Tanzîl wa Asrâr al-Ta'wîl* (Commentary), by Qâzî Abû Sa'îd 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Umar al-Baidâwî). Note also that we have here the clear injunction that if any people offered peace, they were not to be fought against.

91a. By *mischief*, or *fitnah*, is meant *war with the Muslims* (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). Two tribes, Asad and Ghatfân, came to the Muslims and showed an inclination to remain at peace, but when they went back and their people invited them to join them in fighting with the Muslims, they responded to the call. Such people could not be trusted. The importance of these

directions in time of war, when the Muslims were hemmed in on all sides by enemies, can hardly be overestimated.

92a. This verse and the one following it show that the man who killed a believer intentionally could not be a believer. In the state of warfare which then existed in Arabia, disbelievers often made use of ruses, professing a firm belief in Islâm and thus tempting the Muslims to go over to them as religious teachers, and afterwards murdering them.

93 And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his punishment is hell, abiding therein; and Allâh is wroth with him and He has cursed him and prepared for him a grievous chastisement.^a

94 O you who believe, when you go forth (to fight) in Allâh's way, make investigation, and say not to any one who offers you salutation, You are not a believer,^a seeking the good of this world's life. But with Allâh there are abundant gains. You too were such before, then Allâh conferred a benefit on you; so make investigation. Surely Allâh is ever Aware of what you do.^b

93a. The commentators are agreed that this verse speaks of a disbeliever who murders a believer. In fact, the word *intentionally* stands here for murdering a man because he is a believer, as this was what the disbelievers often did.

94a. The original word for salutation is *salâm* (meaning *peace*). The first word of the Muslim salutation stands therefore for the Muslim salutation. The Muslims were surrounded by enemies on all sides, yet they were told not to presume that every Arab tribe belonged to the enemy camp but were to make an investigation first, whether the tribe was really hostile to Islâm. Even when a man belonging to an enemy tribe offered the Muslim salutation, to show that he was a Muslim, he was to be taken as a brother Muslim and could not be dealt with as an enemy. 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Abbâs (Companion) relates a case in which the Muslims while searching for the enemy came upon a man who was tending his goats. The man offered them the Muslim salutation but was killed as he gave no other indication of being a Muslim (Bukhârî 65: IV, 18). It was to stop such cases that the revelation came. Incidentally, it lays down the principle that no Muslim can be called a *kâfir*; not even the man whose claim to Islâm is borne out only by offering the Muslim salutation. The general tendency among the Muslims to declare each other *kâfir* is, however, so strong that even the plain

injunction of this verse is set at naught under the pretext that no Jew or Christian or Hindu can be called a Muslim simply because he offers the Muslim salutation. What the verse lays down is not when a person known to us as a Jew or a Christian or a Hindu can be declared to have become a Muslim, but that a Muslim cannot be called a *kâfir* if he gives indication of his being a Muslim simply by offering the Muslim salutation.

95 The holders-back from among the believers, not disabled by injury, and those who strive hard in Allâh's way with their property and their persons, are not equal. Allâh has made the strivers with their property and their persons to excel the holders-back a (high) degree. And to each Allâh has promised good. And Allâh has granted to the strivers above the holders-back a mighty reward -

96 (High) degrees from Him and protection and mercy. And Allâh is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

SECTION 14: Muslims who remained with the Enemy

97 (As for) those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to themselves, (the *malâ'ikah*) will say: What were you doing? They will say: We were weak in the earth. (They will) say: Was not Allâh's earth spacious, so that you could have migrated therein? So these it is whose refuge is hell - and it is an evil resort.^a

94b. The Muslims were forbidden to kill a man merely because he was a disbeliever. This is made clear in Section 12, where it is laid down that only those disbelievers could be killed who fought against the Muslims. But even when a people fought against the Muslims, a man from among them was not to be killed if he gave the slightest indication that he was a Muslim.

97a. By *those who were unjust to themselves* are meant persons who were convinced of the truth of Islâm, but chose to remain among the disbelievers, who did not allow them to give expression to their beliefs, notwithstanding that they had the means to join the Muslims and avow Islâm openly.

98 Except the weak from among the men and the women and the children who have not the means, nor can they find a way (to escape);

99 So these, it may be that Allâh will pardon them. And Allâh is ever Pardoning, Forgiving.

100 And whoever flees in Allâh's way, he will find in the earth many a place of escape and abundant resources. And whoever goes forth from his home fleeing to Allâh and His Messenger, then death overtakes him, his reward is indeed with Allâh. And Allâh is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

SECTION 15: Prayer when Fighting

101 And when you journey in the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten the prayer; if you fear that those who disbelieve will give you trouble.^a Surely the disbelievers are an open enemy to you.

102 And when you are among them and lead the prayer for them, let a party of them stand up with you, and let them take their arms. Then when they have performed their prostration, let them go to your rear, and let another party who have not prayed come forward and pray with you, and let them take their precautions and their arms. Those who disbelieve long that you may neglect your arms and your baggage, that they may attack you with a sudden united attack. And there is no blame on you, if you are inconvenienced on account of rain or if you are sick, to put away your arms; and take your precautions. Surely Allâh has prepared abasing chastisement for the disbelievers.^a

101a. It is agreed that the prayer service on a journey is shorter than the ordinary prayer service in the *zuhr*, '*asr*' and *ishâ*' prayers and consists of two *rak'ahs fard* instead of four. It is further clear from reports that this was so before the revelation of this verse. According to 'Â'ishah, prayer as instituted from the first consisted of two *rak'ahs* only, whether one was journeying or not, and later on ordinary service in these three prayers was increased to four (Bukhârî 8:1). According to 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Abbâs (Companion), prayer as enjoined from the first consisted of four *rak'ahs* in these three prayers ordinarily, and two *rak'ahs* when journeying (*Sahîh Muslim* (Hadîth), by Imâm Abu-l-Husain ibn Al-Hajjâj 6:5). According to both these views, the shortening of prayer as mentioned in this verse is quite different from the ordinary shorter service of the journey, and its details are given in the next verse. According to 'Umar, however, the shortening on a journey was a result of the revelation of this

verse, and though originally this shortening was allowed only when there was danger from the enemy, it was later on allowed on every journey, whether there was any danger or not. When a question was put to him why prayer was being shortened on a journey when there was no longer any danger, there being peace all around, he replied that he put the same question to the Prophet of Allâh and was told that the shortening “was a *sadaqah* (or charitable gift) of Allâh, so accept His gift” (*Kitâb al-Sunan* (Hadîth), by *Abû Dâwûd* Sulaimân 4:1).

103 So when you have finished the prayer, remember Allâh standing and sitting and reclining. But when you are secure (from danger) keep up (regular) prayer. Prayer indeed has been enjoined on the believers at fixed times.^a

104 And be not weak-hearted in pursuit of the enemy. If you suffer they (too) suffer as you suffer, and you hope from Allâh what they hope not. And Allâh is ever Knowing, Wise.

102a. This verse and the previous one show the importance of prayer in Islâm, which could not be neglected even when facing the enemy. The soldiers of Islâm were not men with whom fighting was a primary occupation; the chief object of their lives, as these verses show, was to hold communion with the Diving Being, forgetting even their imminent danger, when the time of holding such communion arrived.

According to what is stated in this verse, the congregation performed only one *rak'ah* of prayer with the Prophet who was leading the prayer and said two *rak'ahs*, but we are told in a hadîth that the other *rak'ah* was said by each part of the congregation separately (Bukhârî 12:1). This shows the importance of offering prayer in congregation which could not be neglected even on the field of battle.

103a. By *kitâb mauqûl*, or a *timed ordinance*, is meant an ordinance regulated as to time, or *ordained to be performed at fixed times*. The hours of prayer were therefore fixed by the Prophet under Divine guidance, and the observance of the hours of prayer is an essential part of the due observance of prayer. It is this feature of the Islamic prayer which makes it a unique force in the unification of the human race.

SECTION 16: Hypocrites are Dishonest

105 Surely We have revealed the Book to you with truth that you mayest judge between people by means of what Allâh has taught you. And be not one pleading the cause of the dishonest,^a

106 And ask the forgiveness of Allâh. Surely Allâh is ever Forgiving, Merciful.^a

107 And contend not on behalf of those who act unfaithfully to their *nafsahum*. Surely Allâh loves not him who is treacherous, sinful:

108 They seek to hide from men and they cannot hide from Allâh, and He is with them when they counsel by night matters which please Him not. And Allâh ever encompasses what they do.^a

105a. With a little difference in details, the commentators agree that the occasion of the revelation of these verses was a dispute between a Muslim and a Jew, in which judgment was given by the Prophet against the Muslim. Ta'mah ibn Ubairaq had stolen a coat of mail, and having hidden it at a Jew's, afterwards accused the Jew of the theft, while his tribe supported him. The Prophet, notwithstanding the open enmity of the Jews, cleared the Jew of the charge. It was a time when every Muslim hand was sorely needed for the defence of Islâm, and a verdict against a man supported by his whole tribe meant the loss of that tribe. But such considerations did not carry any weight with the Prophet. Thus these verses lay down the broad principle that dishonesty must be punished, and the balance of justice must be held equal between Muslims and non-Muslims and between friends and foes.

106a. The injunction in this as well as the previous verse is meant for every Muslim who is called upon to act as a judge. He must be strictly just as between his own people and aliens, and must further ask the protection of Allâh from being guilty of an act of injustice, even unknowingly, for it is only through Divine protection, that a man in this position can avoid partiality.

108a. Those who supported the guilty man are spoken of here. All such persons are condemned as hypocrites. The same subject is continued in the verses that follow.

109 Behold! You are they who may contend on their behalf in this world's life, but who will contend with Allâh on their behalf on the Resurrection day, or who will have charge of their affairs?

110 And whoever does evil or wrongs his soul, then asks forgiveness of Allâh, will find Allâh Forgiving, Merciful.

111 And whoever commits a sin, commits it only against himself. And Allâh is ever Knowing, Wise.

112 And whoever commits a fault or a sin, then accuses of it one innocent, he indeed takes upon himself the burden of a calumny and a manifest sin.

SECTION 17: Secret Counsels of the Hypocrites

113 And were it not for Allâh's grace upon thee and His mercy, a party of them had certainly designed to ruin thee. And they ruin only themselves,^a and they cannot harm you in any way. And Allâh has revealed to you the Book and the Wisdom, and taught thee what you knew not, and Allâh's grace on you is very great.

114 There is no good in most of their secret counsels except (in) him who enjoins charity or goodness or reconciliation between people. And whoever does this, seeking Allâh's pleasure, We shall give him a mighty reward.

113a. *Adalla-hû* is the equivalent of *ahlaka-hû*, *he destroyed him* or *brought him to perdition* (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî).

115 And whoever acts hostilely to the Messenger after guidance has become manifest to him and follows other than the way of the believers, We turn him to that to which he (himself) turns and make him enter hell; and it is an evil resort.^a

SECTION 18: Idolatry condemned

116 Surely Allâh forgives not setting up partners with Him, and He forgives all besides this to whom He pleases. And whoever sets up a partner with Allâh, he indeed goes far astray.

117 Besides Him they call on nothing but female divinities^a and they call on nothing but a rebellious shaitân,^b

118 Whom Allâh has cursed. And he said: Certainly I will take of Thy servants an appointed portion;

119 And certainly I will lead them astray and excite in them vain desires and bid them so that they will slit the ears of the cattle,^a and bid them so that they will alter Allâh's

creation.^b And whoever takes the devil for a friend, forsaking Allâh, he indeed suffers a manifest loss.

115a. This verse clearly speaks of the hypocrites, who followed *a way other than the way of the believers*. Only a distortion of the words could make them signify that it was a sin to differ with the majority of the Muslims on any question of religion.

117a. *Inâth* has two significances, either of which may be adopted. (1) It signifies *inanimate things*, as trees and stones and wood. (2) It also means *idols*, because they named the idols as *females*, for instance Lât, ‘Uzzâ, Manât (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). *Hasan* says every one of the Arabian tribes had an idol, which they called the *unthâ* (lit., *female*) of such a tribe (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). Hence the word may also be translated as *feminine divinities*.

117b. *Marîd* and *mârid* have both the same significances, viz., *one devoid of all good* (R). According to the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane the significance of *marîd* is *insolent* or *rebellious*.

119a. The practice of slitting or cutting off the ear of certain animals was a prevalent form of polytheism in Arabia, for such an animal was looked upon as devoted to certain idols. See further 5:103a.

120 He promises them and excites vain desires in them. And the *shaitân* promises them only to deceive.

121 These - their refuge is hell, and they will find no way of escape from it.

122 And those who believe and do good, We shall make them enter Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide therein for ever. It is Allâh’s promise, in truth. And who is more truthful in word than Allâh?

123 It will not be in accordance with your vain desires^a nor the vain desires of the People of the Book. Whoever does evil, will be requited for it and will not find for himself besides Allâh a friend or a helper.

124 And whoever does good deeds, whether male or female, and he (or she) is a believer - these will enter the Garden, and they will not be dealt with a whit unjustly.

119b. A comparison with 30:30 will show clearly that by *Allâh’s creation* is here meant the *religion of Allâh*, because the true religion is the natural religion of man. In

30:30 we have: “So set thy face for religion, being upright, the nature made by Allâh in which He has created men. There is no altering Allâh’s creation. That is the right religion - but most people know not”. By the devil’s changing the creation of Allâh is therefore meant the changing of the natural religion of man which requires obedience to Allâh and His laws. Some commentators understand by changing the creation of Allâh *the using of His created things for an object other than that for which they were created*, and worshipping objects such as the sun, etc., which were really created to be subservient to man.

123a. The vain desires of the idolaters were that they would not be raised after death: “And they say: There is nothing but our life of this world, and we shall not be raised again” (6:29). As regards the People of the Book: “And the Jews and the Christians say: We are the sons of Allâh and His beloved ones” (5:18). The true law - the law of nature - is described in what follows, that evil or good has its own reward.

125 And who is better in *Dîn* than he who submits himself entirely to Allâh while doing good (to others) and follows the *millah* (the way as Allâh dictated or the creed) of Ibrâhîm, the upright one? And Allâh took Ibrâhîm for a friend.

126 And to Allâh belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And Allâh ever encompasses all things.

SECTION 19: Equitable Dealings with Orphans and Women

127 And they ask thee a decision about women. Say: Allâh makes known to you His decision concerning them; and that which is recited to you in the Book is concerning widowed women, whom you give not what is appointed for them, while you are not inclined to marry them, nor to the weak among children, and that you should deal justly with orphans. And whatever good you do, Allâh is surely ever Knower of it.^a

127a. The reference in the words, *that which is recited to you in the Book*, is to verse 3, see 3a. There is almost a consensus of opinion on this point. *Yatâma-l-nisâ’i* means *orphans of women*; also *women having no husbands* or *widows* (*Lisân al-‘Arab* (Dictionary), by ‘Allâmah Abu-l-Faḍl Jamâl al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Mukarram). The doing of good to women and orphans is stressed in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân again and again. What is stated here is that a decision regarding the doing of good to women, to weak children and to orphans has already been given. The words, *and that*

which is recited to you in the Book is concerning widowed women whom you give not what is appointed for them while you are not inclined to marry them, are parenthetical, being a reference to verse 3. Whatever significance of the words *yatâma-l-nisâ'i* is adopted, the meaning of the parenthetical passage is that the order given in verse 3 in the words *if you fear that you cannot do justice to orphans marry such women as seem good to you*, relates to orphans of the women (or to widows) whom their share in inheritance was denied, both their share and the share of their orphan children, nor were people inclined to marry them owing to the burden which they brought with them in the shape of their children. So the permission was given that they may marry such women, even up to four. It is an admitted fact that widows and their orphaned children received no share of inheritance. The Qur'ân brought about a great change: it required the giving of inheritance to both women and their orphaned children, and it also recommended that such women should be taken in marriage. The reference to verse 3 is made further clear in verse 129 which speaks of justice between wives.

128 And if a woman fears ill-usage from her husband or desertion^a no blame is on them if they effect reconciliation between them. And reconciliation is better. And avarice is met with in (men's) minds. And if you do good (to others) and keep your duty, surely Allâh is ever Aware of what you do.

129 And you cannot do justice between wives, even though you wish (it), but be not disinclined (from one) with total disinclination, so that you leave her in suspense. And if you are reconciled and keep your duty, surely Allâh is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

130 And if they separate, Allâh will render them both free from want out of His ampleness. And Allâh is ever Ample-giving, Wise.

131 And to Allâh belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And certainly We enjoined those who were given the Book before you and (We enjoin) you too to keep your duty to Allâh. And if you disbelieve, surely to Allâh belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And Allâh is ever Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy.

132 And to Allâh belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And Allâh suffices as having charge of affairs.

128a. There are two words, *nushûz* and *i'râd*, used here. The former literally means *rising* and *nushûz* on the part of the wife has already been explained in 34e. *Nushûz* on

the part of the husband signifies *treating her unjustly, being unkind to her or disliking and hating her* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), and hence it is rendered here as *ill-usage* or *cruelty*. *I'râd* is literally, *turning away, avoiding, shunning or leaving a thing*. Hence I render it as *desertion*.

133 If He please, He will take you away, O people, and bring others. And Allâh is ever Powerful to do that.

134 Whoever desires the reward of this world - then with Allâh is the reward of this world and the Hereafter. And Allâh is ever Hearing, Seeing.

SECTION 20: Hypocrisy Condemned

135 O you who believe, be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allâh, even though it be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives - whether he be rich or poor, Allâh has a better right over them both.^a So follow not (your) low desires, lest you deviate. And if you distort or turn away from (truth), surely Allâh is ever Aware of what you do.

136 O you who believe, believe in Allâh and His Messenger and the Book which He has revealed to His Messenger and the Book which He revealed before. And whoever disbelieves in Allâh and His *Malâ'ikah* angels and His Books and His messengers and the Last Day, he indeed strays far away.

137 Those who believe then disbelieve, again believe and again disbelieve, then increase in disbelief,^a Allâh will never forgive them nor guide them in the (right) way.^b

135a. The meaning is that you should not be partial to the rich man on account of some favour that you may expect from him or some harm that you fear from him, nor should you state other than the truth when the person against whom you bear witness is a poor man, on account of compassion for him. *Allâh has a better right over them* means that *they should be dealt with justly*. Thus, neither ties of kinship and love nor considerations of fear, favour, or compassion should make one swerve a hair's breadth from the truth.

137a. There were some waverers who again and again went over to disbelief. The mention in verse 136 of the Book “which He revealed before”, shows clearly that the Jews are meant, among whom there were many hypocrites.

138 Give news to the hypocrites that for them is a painful chastisement^a–

139 Those who take disbelievers for friends rather than believers. Do they seek for might from them? Might surely belongs wholly to Allâh.

140 And indeed He has revealed to you in the Book that when you hear Allâh’s messages disbelieved in and mocked at, sit not with them until they enter into some other discourse, for then indeed you would be like them. Surely Allâh will gather together the hypocrites and the disbelievers all in hell^a–

141 Those who wait (for misfortunes) for you. Then if you have a victory from Allâh they say: Were we not with you? And if there is a chance for the disbelievers, they say: Did we not prevail over you and defend you from the believers? So Allâh will judge between you on the day of Resurrection. And Allâh will by no means give the disbelievers a way against the believers.

137b. Allâh’s not guiding them is the consequence of their own actions. They wavered first but in the end became firm in disbelief.

138a. *Tabshîr* (related to *bushrah*, i.e. *complexion*) originally denotes *the announcing of an event which produces a change in the complexion*. In common acceptance it is used with regard to *the news which rejoices a man*, but is sometimes used for *the announcement of an event which grieves a man* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

140a. See 6:68 which was revealed at Makkah. The Muslims are told to leave the assembly where truth is derided. Criticism is quite a different thing and a Muslim should always be ready to meet any criticism of his religion.

SECTION 21: End of the Hypocrites

142 The hypocrites seek to deceive Allâh, and He will requite their deceit to them.^a And when they stand up for prayer, they stand up **sluggishly** - they do it only to be seen of men and remember Allâh but little,

143 Wavering between that (and this) - (belonging) neither to these nor to those.^a And whomsoever Allâh leaves in error, thou wilt not find a way for him.

144 O you who believe, take not the disbelievers for friends rather than the believers. Do you desire to give Allâh a manifest proof against yourselves?

145 The hypocrites are surely in the lowest depths of the Fire,^a and you will find no helper for them,

146 Save those who repent and amend and hold fast to Allâh and are sincere in their obedience to Allâh - these are with the believers. And Allâh will soon grant the believers a mighty reward.

142a. For the meaning of *khada'a* and *khâda'a* see 2:9a. *Khâdi'u-hum* means here *the requiter to them of their deceit* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). A comparison of this passage with the similar passage occurring in 2:9 makes the meaning perfectly clear.

143a. *Mudhabdhab*, lit., *much driven away*, has the same significance as *mudhabdhib*, i.e., *wavering* or *vacillating between two things or affairs* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The reference in *that and this* is to belief and disbelief, which is made clear by the words that follow - *belonging neither to these nor to those*, which refer to the *believers* and *disbelievers* spoken of in the concluding words of verse 141.

145a. Insincerity in religion is the worst of all sins. Hence the hypocrites are spoken of as being in the lowest depths of the Fire. The most important question for every believer is: Are his actions in accordance with his avowed beliefs? Does he do what he says? If not, there is a tinge of hypocrisy in him. Elsewhere it is said: "O you who believe, why say you that which you do not? It is most hateful in the sight of Allâh that you say that which you do not" (61:2, 3). The next verse makes a pointed reference to this - Allâh will not punish the Muslims if they are true to their beliefs.

147 Why should Allâh chastise you if you are grateful and believe? And Allâh is ever Multiplier of rewards,^a Knowing.

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148 Allâh loves not the public utterance of hurtful speech, except by one who has been wronged.^a And Allâh is ever Hearing, Knowing.

149 If you do good openly or keep it secret or pardon an evil, Allâh surely is ever Pardoning, Powerful.^a

150 Those who disbelieve in Allâh and His messengers and desire to make a distinction between Allâh and His messengers and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others; and desire to take a course in between -

151 These are truly disbelievers; and We have prepared for the disbelievers an abasing chastisement.

152 And those who believe in Allâh and His messengers and make no distinction between any of them, to them He will grant their rewards. And Allâh is ever Forgiving, Merciful.^a

147a. The word *sh.kir* when used as an attribute of the Divine Being signifies *One Who gives large reward for small works or in Whose estimation small works performed by His servants increase, and Who multiplies His rewards to them* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtaḍâ* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

148a. The use of defamatory speech of every kind regarding others is strictly forbidden, but justification for it may exist in case a person has in some way been wronged.

149a. If you pardon the evil which anyone has done to you, Allâh will pardon your evils, and grant you even good reward; He is not only Pardoning, but also Powerful to grant good reward.

152a. To make distinction between Allâh and His messengers means to believe in one and not in the other. Islâm requires the acceptance of all prophets who were raised for the regeneration of men, and hence a denial of any one of the prophets named in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân takes a man out of the category of believers and places him among the disbelievers.

SECTION 22: Transgressions of the Children of Isrâ'îl

153 The People of the Book ask you to bring down to them a Book from heaven; indeed they demanded of Mûsâ a greater thing than that, for they said: Show us Allâh manifestly. So destructive punishment overtook them on account of their wrongdoing. Then they took the calf (for a god), after clear signs had come to them, but We pardoned this. And We gave Mûsâ clear authority.

154 And We raised the mountain above them at their covenant. And We said to them: Enter the door making obeisance. And We said to them: Violate not the Sabbath; and We took from them a firm covenant.

155 Then for their breaking their covenant and their disbelief in the messages of Allâh and their killing the prophets wrongfully and their saying, Our hearts are covered; nay, Allâh has sealed them owing to their disbelief, so they believe not but a little:^a

156 And for their disbelief and for their uttering against Maryam a grievous calumny:^a

157 And for their saying: We have killed the Masîḥ, ‘Îsâ, son of Maryam, the messenger of Allâh, and they killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the cross,^a but he was made to appear to them as such.^b And certainly those who differ therein are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge about it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for certain:

155a. The incidents referred to in vv. 153-155 have been mentioned in detail in sections 6-8 of chapter 2, see the footnotes there.

156a. The calumny referred to was that Maryam was guilty of fornication (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). Jewish tradition in this connection mentions Panther (Jewish Life of Jesus).

157a. The words *mâ ṣalabû-hu* does not negative ‘Îsâ’s being nailed to the cross; they negative his having expired on the cross as a result of being nailed to it. *Ṣalb* is a well-known way of killing (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm Muḥibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faîd Murtaḍâ and the *Lisân al-‘Arab* (Dictionary), by ‘Allâmah Abu-l-Faḍl Jamâl al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Mukarram). *Ṣalaba-hû* means *he put him to death in a certain well-known manner* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). That ‘Îsâ died a natural death is plainly stated in 5:117: “and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when You did cause me to die, You was the Watcher over them”. See 5:117a. The Gospels contain clear testimony showing that Jesus Christ escaped death on the cross. The following points may be noted: (1) Jesus remained on the cross for a few hours only (Mark 15:25; John 19:14) but death by crucifixion was always tardy. (2) The two men crucified with Jesus were still alive when taken down from the cross; the presumption is that Jesus too was alive. (3) The breaking of legs was resorted to in the case of the two criminals, but dispensed with in the case of Jesus (John 19:32, 33). (4) The side of Jesus being pierced, blood rushed out and this was a

certain sign of life. (5) Even Pilate did not believe that Jesus actually died in so short a time (Mark 15:44). (6) Jesus was not buried like the two criminals, but was given into the charge of a wealthy disciple of his, who lavished care on him and put him in a spacious tomb hewn in the side of a rock (Mark 15:46). (7) When the tomb was seen on the third day, the stone was found to have been removed from its mouth (Mark 16:4), which would not have been the case if there had been a supernatural rising. (8) Mary, when she saw him, took him for the gardener (John 20:15), which shows that Jesus had disguised himself as a gardener. (9) Such disguise would not have been needed if Jesus had risen from the dead. (10) It was in the same body of flesh that the disciples saw Jesus, and the wounds were still there deep enough for a man to thrust his hand in (John 20:25-28). (11) He still felt hunger and ate as his disciples ate (Luke 24:39-43). (12) Jesus Christ undertook a journey to Galilee with two of his disciples walking side by side with him (Matthew 28:10), which shows that he was fleeing for refuge; a journey to Galilee was not necessary to rise to heaven. (13) In all post-crucifixion appearances Jesus is found hiding himself as if he feared being discovered. (14) Jesus Christ prayed the whole night before his arrest to be saved from the accursed death on the cross, and he also asked his disciples to pray for him; the prayers of a righteous man in distress and affliction are always accepted. He seems to have even received a promise from God to be saved, and it was to this promise that he referred when he cried out on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Hebrews 5:7 makes the matter still more clear, for there it is plainly stated that the prayer of Jesus was accepted: "When he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared". The statements made in the Qur'ân corroborate the above statements quoted from the Gospels. Jesus did not die on the cross, nor was he killed as were the two thieves, but to the Jews he appeared as if he were dead.

157b. The words *shubbiha la-hum* may bear two interpretations: *he was made to be like* (it) or *to resemble* (it); or *the matter was made dubious or obscure* (Arabic-English Lexicon by Edward William Lane). The *Rûh al-Ma'ânî* says the meaning may be that *the matter became dubious to them*. The story that someone else was made to resemble 'Îsâ is not borne out by the words of the Qur'ân, which could only mean, if an object were mentioned, that 'Îsâ was made to resemble someone, not that someone was made to resemble 'Îsâ.

158 Nay, Allâh exalted him in His presence. And Allâh is ever Mighty, Wise.^a

159 And there is none of the People of the Book but will believe in this before his death; and on the day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them.^a

160 So for the iniquity of the Jews, We forbade them the good things which had been made lawful for them, and for their hindering many (people) from Allâh's way.

161 And for their taking usury - though indeed they were forbidden it - and their devouring the property of people falsely. And We have prepared for the disbelievers from among them a painful chastisement.

162 But the firm in knowledge among them and the believers believe in that which has been revealed to you and that which was revealed before you, and those who keep up prayer and give the poor-rate and the believers in Allâh and the Last Day - these it is to whom We shall give a mighty reward.

158a. For the significance of *raf'* see 3:55b. Being exalted in the Divine presence was opposed to being killed on the cross. Deuteronomy 21:23 explains this, for there we have, *he that is hanged is accursed of God*. If Jesus had died on the cross he would have been accursed; hence the statement made here - he was not killed on the cross and accursed but he was exalted in the Divine presence.

159a. Both the Jews and the Christians necessarily believe in the death of "Jesus" on the cross, while according to the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân they have really no sure knowledge of it. The Jews reject his claim to Messiahship on the basis of Deuteronomy 21:23: "He that is hanged is accursed of God". Their belief is that since Jesus died on the cross he was accursed, and no one who is accursed of God can be a prophet. Following quite a different line of argument, a Christian believes that "Jesus" died on the cross and was accursed. He admits the truth of Deuteronomy 21:23, but he says that unless Jesus was accursed he could not take away the sins of those that believe in him. As in Galatians 3:13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree". Hence the fundamental principle of the belief of both Jews and Christians is that "Jesus" died on the cross, and the meaning of the verse is clear, viz., every Jew and Christian, notwithstanding that he has no sure knowledge at all, must believe before his death that "Jesus" died on the cross.

SECTION 23:

Previous Revelation bears out Qur'ânic Statements

163 Surely We have revealed to you as We revealed to Nûḥ and the prophets after him, and We revealed to Ibrâhîm and Ismâ'îl and Ishâq and Ya'qûb and the tribes, and 'Îsâ and Ayyûb and Yûnus and Hârûn and Sulaimân, and We gave to Dâwûd a scripture.

164 And (We sent) messengers We have mentioned to you before and messengers We have not mentioned to you. And to Mûsâ Allâh addressed His word, speaking (to him)^a-.

165 Messengers bearers of good news and warners, so that the people may have no plea against Allâh after the (coming of) messengers. And Allâh is ever Mighty, Wise.

166 But Allâh bears witness by that which He has revealed to thee that He has revealed it with His knowledge, and the *malâ'ikah* (also) bear witness. And Allâh is sufficient as a witness.

164a. The prophets spoken of here all belong to the Isrâ'îlite race. Ibrâhîm and his immediate descendants are mentioned first; then follow the three prophets of Isrâ'îl who suffered great tribulations, viz. 'Îsâ, Ayyûb, and Yûnus. The next group is that of the four who were both rulers and prophets, viz. Mûsâ, Hârûn, Dawûd and Sulaimân. But as Dâwûd and Mûsâ stand in a special relation to the Holy Prophet, the former singing his praises throughout his Psalms and the latter prophesying his advent in the clearest words, they are spoken of separately at the end. The good news which they brought relates as much to the peace and happiness which is granted to the righteous as to the advent of one who, coming at the end, should unite the qualifications of all the prophets in his own person, and accordingly make the nations of the earth as one nation.

167 Those who disbelieve and hinder (others) from Allâh's way, they indeed have erred, going far astray.

168 Those who disbelieve and act unjustly, Allâh will never forgive them, nor guide them to a path,

169 Except the path of hell, to abide in it for a long time. And that is easy to Allâh.

170 O mankind, the Messenger has indeed come to you with truth from your Rabb, so believe, it is better for you. And if you disbelieve, then surely to Allâh belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. And Allâh is ever Knowing, Wise.

171 O People of the Book exceed not the limits in your religion nor speak anything about Allâh, but the truth. The Masîh, ‘Îsâ, son of Maryam, is only a messenger of Allâh and His word^a which He communicated to Maryam and a mercy from Him.^b So believe in Allâh and His messengers. And say not, Three.^c Desist, it is better for you. Allâh is only one Deity. Far be it from His glory to have a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the *samâwât* and whatever is in the earth. And sufficient is Allâh as having charge of affairs.

171a. *Kalimah*, or *word*, is here equivalent to *prophecy*, in which sense the word is frequently used in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân. ‘Îsâ is called a *prophecy* because he was born in accordance with a prophecy from Allâh, just as in a saying the Holy Prophet speaks of himself as “*the prayer of my father Ibrâhîm*”, the significance being that he appeared in fulfilment of *Ibrâhîm*’s prayer. For a fuller explanation see 3:45a. And the significance of *ilqâ’* varies according to its object. When its object is a tangible thing, it implies the act of throwing or casting. But you say *alqaitu ilai-hi khair-an*, i.e., *I did good to him*, and *alqaitu ilai-hi-l-mawaddata*, i.e., *I offered love to him* (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faîd Murtaḍâ* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), and *alqâ ilayya sirra-hû*, i.e., *he revealed to me his secret* (Tin art. *sirr*), and *alqaitu ilai-hi-l-qaula* which corresponds to what is said here, the object of the verb being *kalimah* instead of *qaul*, both having the same meaning, must be rendered *I communicated to him the saying*. Sale’s and Rodwell’s *conveying into Mary* and Palmer’s *casting into Mary*, as if the object were a tangible one, are foreign to the real sense of the word.

171b. *Rauh* and *rûh* both mean *mercy* of Allâh, according to Abû Mansûr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Azharî (Grammarian) (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane under *rauh*), this being the proper significance of the word in the passage under discussion. *Rûh* also signifies *inspiration* or *Divine revelation* (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faîd Murtaḍâ* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). If this significance is adopted, it would be an explanation of what is said in the foregoing words, i.e. His prophecy which He communicated to Mary. The passage would thus mean that the advent of Jesus was in

accordance with a prophecy and an inspiration from the Divine Being. Even if we take *spirit* to be the meaning of the word *rûh*, it does in no way carry Jesus a step beyond the limits of mortality, for of Adam also it has been said, *I breathed My spirit into him* (15:29). In fact, according to the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân *the spirit of God is breathed into every man*: “*Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit and gave you ears and eyes and hearts*” (32:9). Further we have a saying referred to by the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane under *rauḥ*, *aḥya al-nâsa bi-rûḥi-hî*, where the correct reading is *rûḥ*, and not *rauḥ*, meaning *He (Allâh) has quickened all human beings with His divine revelation*. And *rûḥ-un min-hu*, which could only mean *a revelation from Him*, is further evidence that even in this sense the word is not exclusively applicable to ‘Îsâ, for he is not *the* word of Allâh or *the* revelation from Him, but only *a* word or *a* revelation.

SECTION 24: Prophethood of ‘Îsâ

172 The Messiah disdains not to be a servant of Allâh, nor do the *malâ’ikah* who are near to Him. And whoever disdains His service and is proud, He will gather them all together to Himself.

173 Then as for those who believe and do good, He will pay them fully their rewards and give them more out of His grace. And as for those who disdain and are proud, He will chastise them with a painful chastisement, and they will find for themselves besides Allâh no friend nor helper.

174 O people, manifest proof has indeed come to you from your Lord and We have sent down to you a clear light.

171c. The doctrine of Trinity is plainly rejected here. There are not three persons in Godhead, but only one: *Allâh is only one Deity*. The Arabic Glorious Qur'ân nowhere says that the Christian Trinity is formed of Jesus, Mary, and God, although it no doubt refers to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the worship of Mary in 5:116, for which see 5:116a.

175 Then as for those who believe in Allâh and hold fast by Him, He will admit them to His mercy and grace, and guide them to Himself on a right path.

176 They ask thee for a decision. Say: Allâh gives you a decision concerning the person who has neither parents nor children. If a man dies (and) he has no son and he has a sister, hers is half of what he leaves, and he shall be her heir if she has no son. But if there be two (sisters), they shall have two-thirds of what he leaves. And if there are brethren, men and women, then for the male is the like of the portion of two females. Allâh makes clear to you, lest you err. And Allâh is Knower of all things.^a

176a. The rule given here supplements the law of inheritance as given at the commencement of this chapter, and is said to have been revealed very late. As explained in 12b, the *kalâlah* spoken of here is different from the *kalâlah* spoken of in verse 12. Here there are neither children nor parents and therefore the whole of the inheritance goes to the brothers and the sisters.

Reversion to the law of inheritance just after speaking of Jesus Christ has perhaps a deeper meaning. It is a fact that no prophet appeared among the Israelites after Jesus Christ, and therefore his death really left Israel without a spiritual head who should rise to the eminence of prophethood. The spiritual kingdom which was promised to Abraham and which hitherto remained in the house of Israel, was now taken from the Israelites and made over to the brother nation, the Ishmaelites. This would also explain the words addressed to Moses: "God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me" (Deuteronomy 18:15), where the spiritual inheritance is clearly made to devolve on the brethren of the Israelites, i.e., the Ishmaelites, and thus *from the midst of thee* is clearly explained as meaning *from the midst of thy brethren*. Moses saw clearly that the Israelites would lose their title to the inheritance of the spiritual kingdom before the advent of the Prophet who was to be his *like*. And Jesus made the same clear in different words when he said, addressing the Israelites: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43).